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SIMPLIFIED BY
ELIZABETH LEWIS

THE PRINCESS AND CURDIE

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SHE HELD OUT HER HAND

George Macdonald Stories For Little Folks

THE PRINCESS AND CURDIE

SIMPLIFIED BY

ELIZABETH LEWIS

AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN SIMPLIFIED"

WITH SIX FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY

MARIA L. KIRK

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

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THE PRINCESS AND CURDIE

CHAPTER I

CURDIE SHOOTS THE PIGEON

CURDIE was the son of Peter, the miner. He lived with his father and mother in a cottage built on the mountain side, and he worked with his father inside the mountain.

It was the business of Curdie and his father and the many other miners to dig passages deep down and far into the mountain and seek out the silver ore in the rock and carry it out. Of the other precious things in the mountain they knew little or nothing. Silver ore was what they were sent to find, and in the darkness and danger of the mines they found it.

The mines belonged to the king of the country, and the miners were his servants, working under his overseers and officers. He was a real king—that is, one who ruled for the good of his people and not to please himself. And he wanted the silver not to buy rich things for himself but to help him to govern the country, and pay the armies that defended it, and the judges who tried to secure justice for every one.

Nothing could have been put to better purposes than the silver the king's miners got for him.

About a year before this story begins, the king's only child, little Princess Irene, had been living in a grand old house or castle on this same mountain side where Curdie lived. The spiteful little goblins who then lived within the mountain had tried to catch her and carry her away into their dark caves. But Curdie had found out about it and had managed to defeat their wicked plans.

The king had been so pleased with the boy—then nearly thirteen years of age—that when he carried away Princess Irene, he asked Curdie to go with him. But he was still better pleased when he found that Curdie would not leave his father and mother all alone to go. He was a right good king and knew that the love of a boy who would not leave his father and mother to be made a great man was worth ten thousand offers to die for his sake, and would prove so when the right time came. So the king took a kind farewell of Curdie and his father and mother and rode away with little Irene on his horse before him.

Things seemed very dull to Curdie after they were gone, and there was nothing for him to do but go on working in the gloomy mines. His father and mother were not entirely happy either, because they fancied that they had stood in the way of their boy's good fortune. It would have been a fine thing, they thought, if he could have ridden away in the good

king's train. He might soon have become a captain and had a fine horse and been in command of men.

Perhaps Curdie thought about this in his secret heart also, and it may be that that was the reason he began to grow duller and rougher in his ways and much less pleasant than he had been. For nothing will make one do that so surely as to brood over and regret the right thing or the generous thing he has done because the other thing he might have done would have been so much more interesting to himself.

At all events, as Curdie grew older he began to grow coarser and commoner, more like a stupid miner and less like the manly boy he had been. On his way to and from the mine he took less and less notice of the bees and butterflies, moths and dragon-flies, the flowers and the brooks and the clouds. Yes, Curdie was gradually changing into just a commonplace miner.

Another sign of it was that when he and his father and mother talked about the Princess Irene's beautiful fairy grandmother and her magic thread which he once fancied had led him to find the princess, or of the delicious ointment she had rubbed on his wound and which had cured it at once, or of her lovely globe of light and its silvery beams down which the snow-white dove had sailed to circle about him and the princess and the king just before the king had ridden away into the night—when they talked of these things, Curdie just said to himself now that it was all

nonsense! Even when his mother said she had once seen a certain mysterious light of the same description, Curdie felt that he did not believe it—only he had the grace not to say so.

In fact, he began to make up his mind that the only things that were true were such things as he could see and touch and handle for himself. He began to feel that he did not want to hear anything about what his father or his mother knew or believed. That was simply old people's talk and of no use at all. As for the things which had been gathered together from what all the people of the world had believed for thousands and thousands of years—why, that was just tiresome stuff which could not interest any one.

You may think it strange for Curdie to feel in this way, but plenty of people do. And they go on becoming duller and coarser day by day because they have never learned that it is what the whole world has found out to be true during thousands of years—the world's experience, as we say—which makes it possible to do new and beautiful things to-day. Nor do they ever learn that of all these true things the best is something which you cannot see, nor hear, nor touch, but only believe in.

Moreover, Curdie was growing hard and cruel because he was growing stupid. He had made himself a bow and some arrows, and was teaching himself to shoot with them. He was learning to like to shoot and kill things, or shoot and wound them only—not

because the things he shot were bad or dangerous and ought to be killed, but just for sport, just to amuse himself!

One evening in the early summer, as he was walking home from the mine, with his bow and arrows in his hand, a light flashed across his eyes. He looked, and there was a snow-white pigeon settling on a rock in front of him, in the red light of the level sun. It fell at once to work, smoothing one of its wings in which a feather or two had got twisted. It was indeed a lovely being, and Curdie had not grown too stupid to think first how pretty it was, and how happy it must be, flitting through the air like a flash—a live bolt of light! It stooped to fly again. Another moment, and it would have been aloft in the rosy light—it was just bending its little legs to spring. But—at that moment it fell on the path, broken-winged and bleeding from Curdie's cruel arrow!

With a gush of pride at his skill, and pleasure at his success, he ran to pick up his prey. I must say for him that he picked it up gently, and held the little white shape in his hands, its whiteness stained now with its blood. And the winged thing looked up at him with such eyes, as if asking what was the matter! Then the eyes closed, to open again presently with the same question. It did not once flutter or try to get away. It only throbbed and bled and looked at him!

Curdie's heart began to grow large in his bosom. What could it mean? It was nothing but a pigeon,

and why should he not kill a pigeon? Once more it opened its eyes—then closed them again and its throbbing ceased. In spite of himself, Curdie gave a sob. Its last look reminded him of his little princess —he did not know why. But in spite of his unbelief, he asked himself if this could be one of her fairy grandmother's pigeons—even the one which had flown down the silvery beam of light and circled little Irene and him on the last night he had seen her.

Suddenly everything around him seemed against him. The red sunset stung him. The rocks frowned at him. The pleasant wind which had been fanning his face dropped away. Was the whole world going to cast him out? Then the sun went down. Great clouds gathered over the west and shortened the twilight. The wind gave a howl and lay down again. The clouds gathered thicker. There came a rumbling which he thought was thunder. And still he stood, holding the dead pigeon tenderly in his hand. It grew darker and darker!

But now an evil something began to move in his heart. "What a fool I am!" he said to himself, and was just going to throw the bird from him and whistle when—a brightness shone all around him! He lifted his eyes and saw a great globe of silvery light shining somewhere above the roof of the old castle—Irene's fairy grandmother's, was it? He did not believe it, and yet—somehow he did. Then he saw how its light fell upon the white bird in his

hand. At that moment the pigeon gave a little flutter.

"*It's not dead!*" cried Curdie, almost with a shriek. The same instant he was running full speed toward the castle, never letting his heels down lest he should shake the wounded pigeon he carried. When he reached the castle and ran into the little garden in front of it there stood the door wide open. This was as he had hoped, for what could he have said if he had had to knock at it? But where to go next he could not tell. All he knew was that he must go up, and presently he saw the great staircase rising before him. Up he went, and up, down passage after passage, and after a time he found himself before a little steep stair in a corner. When he reached the top of that he found three doors, one in front and one on each side of him. Out of one door was coming the sound of a spinning-wheel, and at this one he therefore knocked.

"Come in, Curdie!" said a voice.

Gently he opened the door, and what did he see? Nothing at first—except, indeed, a great, sloping shaft of moonlight that came in at a high window and rested on the floor. Then in it he caught sight of the wheel—a thin, delicate thing, reminding him of a spider's web in a hedge. A step nearer, and he saw with a start two little hands at work at it. Another moment, and he perceived the form to which the hands belonged—a small, withered creature, so old that no age would have seemed too great to write

under her picture. She sat crumpled together, a filmy thing that it seemed a puff would blow away. Her gray hair mixed with the moonlight so that he could not tell where one began and the other ended.

As Curdie stood staring, and wondering if this could be the lovely fairy grandmother Irene had talked about, she leaned forward into the moonlight and he caught a glimpse of her eyes! What wonderful eyes! If one saw nothing else, she was truly beautiful! They looked as if they knew all that had been true and worth knowing since time began! And he remembered, with a quake of fear, how she had known him and called him by name when he but knocked at the door!

But did knowing all that was true—this world experience, as we say—make people look like that, gray and crumpled and thin and old? If so, he felt again the old, stupid feeling that he did not care for the knowledge of other people—of older people—of the world! He did not want to look like that—only for the wonderful eyes that were still looking at him through the moonlight! And now he remembered why he had come, and took a step or two nearer, holding out the motionless pigeon.

"What have you there?" she asked. Somehow Curdie felt that she knew. He said nothing, but just reached his hand farther out into the moonlight. The moment the rays fell upon it the pigeon gave another faint flutter. The strange old creature took

it and held it against her breast, murmuring over it. When Curdie saw how distressed she was, he was sorrier still and said, "I did not mean to do any harm! I did not think of its being yours!"

"Ah, Curdie, you say you did not mean any harm? Did you mean any good?"

"No," answered the boy.

"Well, whoever does not mean good is always very near to meaning harm! And what other wrong have you been doing beside shooting my white pigeon, just for fun?"

Her voice was so soft and unreal that Curdie could not tell whether it *was* her voice or only the low hum of the wheel, which was still spinning, spinning, spinning of itself. But, whatever it was, the low sound seemed to draw him into a reverie in which he thought deeply of himself and of all that he had been doing. It was some time before he roused himself and looked up.

"I know now," he said at last, slowly. "I have been doing wrong right along because I have just been going on from day to day, not caring to do any good at all—not caring to get up to anything better!"

"If you see that," said the soft, old voice, "I am glad you shot my bird."

"How can you be," cried Curdie, "when that was one of the bad, cruel things I did?"

"Because it has brought you to see what sort you were and what sort you will be again, if you do not

mind. Now that you are sorry, my poor bird will be better! Look up, my dovey!"

The pigeon gave a flutter and spread out one of its red-spotted wings across the old woman's breast.

"I will mend it," she said, "and in a week or two it will be flying again. But never again kill anything without a good reason for it. There are plenty of bad things that want killing, and a day will come when your bow and arrow will prove useful. Will you remember us, Curdie, or just go away and forget again and scoff and disbelieve?"

As she spoke she held out her hand to him and drew herself up from her stool with his help, and—when or how it came about, Curdie could not tell—the same instant she stood before him a tall, strong woman, very old indeed, but as grand as she was old. Straight as a pillar, she stood before the astonished boy, and the wounded bird spread out both its wings across her breast like a beautiful ornament of frosted silver! Old she was, without doubt, but he saw she was strong with a strength that would never grow old!

"Now I can never forget you!" he cried. "I see now what you really are!"

"Did I not tell you the truth as I sat at my wheel?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Curdie.

"I can do no more than tell you the truth now," she replied. "Look as I may, I can do nothing better for you than that. Now go!"

Curdie obeyed at once and took a few steps toward the door. But there he paused to ask a last question. "What shall I call you?" he asked, and turned to look at her. There was nobody there! The moonlight had vanished and the room was utterly dark.

A great fear came upon him, and yet he felt that he was not really afraid. Down the long stairs he groped his way slowly but fearlessly, and soon was climbing the mountain with somehow a great joy in his heart. When he passed the rock where he had cruelly and uselessly shot the pigeon, his heart leaped to think that it would soon be flying again, and he ran the next hundred yards at full speed up the hill. Some dark shadows passed him: he did not even care to think what they were, but let them run.

CHAPTER II

THE LADY OF THE SILVER MOON

The next night, Peter, the miner, and Curdie had a strange experience. They were just about to leave the mine to go home, but paused a few moments to rest. Father and son had seated themselves on a piece of rock at a corner where three passages of the mine met—the one they had come along from their work, one to the right leading out of the mountain, and the other to the left leading far into a portion of it which had long been disused. Curdie had once been in the habit of going up this last one to watch the goblins. But the goblins had turned the water into that part of the mine. Now there was a deep gulf there which stopped any one from going up.

They had just risen and were turning to the right to go home, when a gleam caught their eyes and made them look along the old disused passageway to the left. Far up they saw a pale green light about half way between the floor and the roof of the passage. They saw nothing but the light, which was like a large star, and yet it shed hardly any light around it although it was so bright. Wonderful stories were told among the miners of magic gems that gave out light of themselves, and this looked as if it might come from the heart of such a gem. So they went up the old passage to find out what it could be.

To their surprise they found, however, that after going some distance they were no nearer to it, so far as they could judge, than when they started. It did not seem to move, and yet they, moving, did not approach it. Still they kept on for it was far too wonderful a thing to lose sight of, so long as they could keep it. At length they drew near the hollow where the water lay and still were no nearer the light. Where they expected to be stopped by the water, however, water there was none. Something had drained it off and the passage lay open.

And now, to their surprise, the light, instead of being in front of them, was shining at the same distance to the right where they did not know there was any passage at all. But they were hardly well into this, still following the light, when Curdie thought he recognized some of the passages he had so often gone through when he was watching the goblins.

Then all of a sudden they saw that the light which they had taken to be a great way off from themselves was really almost within reach of their hands. At the same instant it began to grow larger and thinner; the point of light grew dim as it spread; the greenness melted away; and in a moment or two, instead of a star, a dark, dark, yet luminous face was looking at them with living eyes! And Curdie felt a great awe swell up in his heart, for he thought he had seen those wonderful eyes before.

"I see you know me, Curdie," said a voice.

"If your eyes are you," said Curdie, "then I know you. But I never saw your face before."

"Yes, you have seen it, Curdie," said the voice.

And with that the darkness melted away from it, and down from the face came out clearly the form that belonged to it. At last Curdie and his father beheld a lady "beautiful exceedingly," dressed in something pale green like velvet, over which her hair fell in cataracts of a rich golden color. It looked as if it were pouring down from her head and vanishing in a golden mist as it reached the floor. It came flowing from under the edge of a coronet of gold set with pearls and emeralds. In the front of the crown was a great emerald which looked somehow as if out of it had come the light they had followed. There was no ornament else about her except on her slippers, which were one mass of gleaming emeralds of all shades of green. She looked about five-and-twenty years old. And for all the difference, Curdie knew, somehow or other, he could not have told how, that the face before him was that of the old princess, Irene's fairy grandmother.

By this time all around them had grown light, and now first they could see where they were. They stood in a great, splendid cavern which Curdie recognized as that to which he had followed Glump, the goblin. But, strange to tell, the light came streaming, sparkling, shooting from stones of many colors in the sides and roof and floor of the cavern—stones of all colors

CURDIE AND HIS FATHER BEHELD A LADY, "BEAUTIFUL EXCEEDINGLY"

of the rainbow and many more. It was a glorious sight—the whole place flashing with colors—in one spot a great light of red, in another of yellow. Here and there were groups of stones of all hues, and again a cluster of tiny spots of brilliant light. Yet Curdie knew that all the beauty of the cavern—yes, of the whole creation—seemed gathered into the person of the lady. All dwindled into nothing as he looked again at her, though there was nothing on her that flashed or glowed or shone.

"I was here once before," he said. "The place was full of torches and the walls gleamed, but nothing as they do now. And there was no light in the place."

"You want to know where the light comes from?" she said. "Then see! I will go out of the cavern. Do not be afraid, but watch!"

She went slowly out. The moment she turned her back to go the light began to pale and fade. The moment she was out of sight the place was as black as night. Only the smoky-yellow red of their lamps, which they thought had gone out long ago, cast a dusky glimmer around them.

For a time that seemed to them long they stood waiting while still "the mother of light" did not return. So long was she absent that they began to grow anxious. How were they to find their way back if their lamps should go out? To spend the night there was to sit and wait until an earthquake rent the mountain. Day could come in by no other way.

So long did they wait that it was well there were two of them. And their lamps *were* going out! They grew redder and smokier! But they did not lose courage, for two people can help each other have faith and patience.

Still she did not return. They grew weary and sat down on the rocky floor, for wait they would—indeed, wait they *must!* Each one watched his lamp grow dimmer and dimmer. But ever as it sank, the image in each one's mind of the lady of light grew stronger and clearer. Then the lamps went out and all was the blackness of darkness up to their very hearts and all around them.

Was it? No! Far away—it seemed miles away—shone one faint point of green light. Where, who could tell? They only knew that it shone. It grew larger and seemed to draw nearer. At last, as they watched with delight, it seemed once more within reach of a hand. Then it spread and melted as before. And there were the eyes—and the face—and the lovely form—and lo! the cavern was blazing again with lights!

She looked at them a moment smilingly before she spoke. Then she said to Peter, "I have known you long."

"How can that be?" answered Peter, humbly and, indeed, foolishly. "How can you have known a poor man like me?"

"I am poor as well as rich," she said. "And it is

I who have made you poor, Peter. It is a great privilege to be poor—though one that no man has ever wanted. Things come to the poor that cannot get in at the door of the rich. But it is only a *privilege*—not a *virtue*—to be poor. And now I am going to tell you what no one knows but myself. You, Peter, and your wife have the blood of the royal family in your veins. That is why I have been training Curdie for a work that must soon be done. He must go soon to the king's court. I was near losing him, and had to send my pigeon. Had he not shot it that would have been better. But he repented, and that shall be as good in the end." And she turned to Curdie with a smile.

"Please, may I ask a question?" said the boy. "Are you the Lady of the Silver Moon?"

"You may call me that, Curdie, if you like."

"And now I see you dark," said Curdie, "and clothed in green and the mother of all the light in the stones of the earth. And the Princess Irene called you her fairy grandmother. And you spin the spider threads and take care of a whole people of pigeons. Then again you are worn to a gray shadow with old age and yet are as young as anybody and as strong!"

The lady stooped toward a large green stone bedded in the rock of the floor and looking like a well of glassy light in it. She laid hold of it with her fingers, broke it out, and gave it to Peter. Strong, indeed!

The boy stood looking at her strange and wonderful eyes and thinking hard: "She is just all that is true and always true, whether you can see it or only believe it. What is true is always very old and yet very young—and very strong and always beautiful."

As if she had seen his thoughts, she answered: "Yes, Curdie. Shapes are only dresses, and dresses are only names. That which is inside is the same all the time. But people see me differently. For instance, if a thief were to come in here just now he would think he saw the demon of the mine, all in green flames, come to protect her treasure. He would run like a hunted wild goat."

"I think I understand," said Curdie.

"And now are you ready?" she asked.

"Yes," said the boy, simply.

"You do not know what for?"

"You do," said Curdie, "and that is enough."

"You could not have given me a better answer—or done more to prepare yourself, Curdie," she returned, with a radiant smile. "Do you think you will know me again?"

"I think so. But how can I tell what you will look like next?"

"Ah, that indeed! But those who know me *well,* know me whatever new dress or shape or name I may be in."

"But if you want me to know you again," said Curdie, "could you not give me some sign, or tell

me something about you that never changes—or some other way to know you—or thing to know you by?"

"No, Curdie. That would be to keep you from knowing me. You must know me in quite another way from that. It would not be the least use to you or me either if I were to make you know me in that way. It would be but to know the sign of me—not to know me, myself. No, people who know what is true do not know it by any sign about it. They just know within themselves that it is true. So you must just do what you can to know me, and if you do, you will. But come now, I will lead you out of this cavern."

As she spoke she turned and led the way from the cavern, which, as if a door had been closed behind them, sank into perfect darkness. They saw nothing more of the lady except the green star, which again seemed a good distance in front of them. And again they seemed to get no nearer to it, though they followed it at a quick pace through the mountain. But they trusted to it entirely and did not try to feel their way with either foot or hand, but walked straight on through the pitch-dark passages. When, at length, the night of the upper world looked in at the mouth of the mine, the green light seemed to lose its way among the stars and they saw it no more.

Out they came into the cool, blessed night. It was very late and only starlight. To their surprise, three paces away they saw, seated upon a stone, an old

woman in a cloak which they took for black. When they came up close to it they saw it was red.

"Good evening," said Peter.

"Good evening," returned the old woman, in a voice as old as herself.

But Curdie took off his cap and said, "I am your servant, Princess!"

The old woman replied, "Come to me in the dove tower to-morrow night, Curdie—alone!"

"I will," said Curdie.

And so they parted, and the father and son went home to their cottage on the mountain side.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRE OF ROSES

THE next night Curdie went home from the mine a little earlier than usual, to make himself tidy before going to the dove tower. His Lady of the Silver Moon had not given him any exact time to be there. He would go as near the time he had gone first as he could. And soon he shot and ran and jumped and seemed almost to fly down the long, winding, steep path until he came to the gate of the king's house.

There he met with a difficulty he had not looked for. In the open door stood the housekeeper, and she seemed to broaden herself out until she almost filled the doorway.

"So," she said, "it is you, young man, is it? You are the person who comes in and goes out when he pleases, and keeps running up and down my stairs without ever saying by your leave or even wiping his shoes, and always leaves the door open? Do you know that this is my house?"

"No, I do not," said Curdie, respectfully. "It is the king's house."

"That is all the same. The king left it to me to take care of, and that you shall know! Don't you see by my dress that I am in the king's service?"

"And am I not one of his miners?"

"Ah! That goes for nothing. You are a laborer—a nobody! You carry a pickaxe. I carry the keys at my girdle. See! Go along with you!"

She would have shut the door in his face had she not been afraid that when she stepped back he would step in before she could get it in motion. For it was very heavy and always seemed unwilling to shut.

Curdie came a pace nearer. She lifted the great house-key from her side and threatened to strike him with it, calling to the men-servants at the same time to come and help her. Before one of them could answer, however, she gave a great shriek and turned and fled, leaving the door wide open.

Curdie looked behind him and saw an animal whose grewsome look even he who had seen so many strange goblin animals had never seen equalled. Its eyes were flaming with anger, but it seemed to be at the housekeeper, for it came cowering and creeping up and laid its head on the ground at Curdie's feet. Curdie hardly waited to look at it, however, but ran into the house, up the stairs and through the dark passages to the door of the old Princess and there knocked.

"Come in," said the voice of the Lady of the Silver Moon.

Curdie opened the door, but to his astonishment saw no room there. Could he have opened a wrong door? There was the great sky and the stars, and beneath he could see nothing—only darkness. But

what was that in the sky straight in front of him? A great wheel of fire turning and turning and flashing out blue lights!

"Come in, Curdie," said the voice again. "It is all right. Come in!"

Curdie stepped forward at once, though for just a minute he was tempted to feel with his foot to see if there was a floor to hold him. But he moved forward and somehow found it all firm and strong. No sooner was he in than he saw that the great revolving wheel was her spinning-wheel, near the other end of the room, turning very fast and flashing out a strange and brilliant light. Behind it, of course, sat the princess, but whether an old woman as thin as a skeleton leaf or a glorious lady as young as perfection he could not tell for the whirling and the gleaming of the wheel. He seemed to hear her voice, however, laughing low or humming, he did not know which.

"Come now, Curdie, to this side of my wheel, and you will find me," she said, with the laugh still sounding on in her words.

Curdie obeyed and passed the wheel, and there she stood to receive him—fairer than when he saw her last, a little younger still, and dressed not in green and emeralds, but in pale blue with a coronet set with pearls. Her slippers were covered with opals that gleamed every color of the rainbow.

The room he was in was a marvel for beauty. The

high ceiling was all a golden vine from which hung clusters of bright glowing gems of all colors, and from the centre hung a glorious globe of light—the silver moon itself! The room was so large that, looking back, he could scarcely see the end at which he entered. But the other end was only a few yards from him, and there he saw another wonder. On a huge hearth a great fire was burning, and the fire was a huge heap of roses and yet it was fire. The smell of the roses filled the air, and the heat of the flames of them glowed upon his face.

He turned an inquiring look upon the lady.

"Curdie," she said, in answer to his eyes, "you have stood more than one trial already and have stood them well. Now I am going to put you to a harder. Do you think you are ready to stand it?"

"I cannot tell," said Curdie. "You must judge me yourself."

"Go and thrust both of your hands into that fire!" she said quickly, almost hurriedly.

Curdie dared not stop to think! It was much too terrible to think about! He rushed to the fire and thrust both his hands right into the middle of the heap of flaming roses and his arms half way up to his elbows. And it hurt! How it *did* hurt. But he did not draw them back. He held the pain as if it were a thing that would kill him if he let it go—as, indeed, it would have done! He was in terrible fear lest it should conquer him. But when it had risen to the

HE THRUST BOTH HIS HANDS INTO THE HEAP OF FLAMING ROSES

pitch that he thought he *could* bear it no longer, it began to fall again. It went on growing less and less till it became, in contrast to what it had been, almost pleasant.

At last it ceased altogether, and Curdie thought his hands had been burned to cinders, if not ashes, for he did not feel them at all. The princess told him to take them out and look at them. He did so and found that all that was gone from them was the rough hard skin. They were now smooth and white like those of the princess.

"Come to me," she said. And when he had obeyed she asked him, "Would you like to know why I made you put your hands into the fire?"

Curdie looked at them again and said, "To take the marks of the work off them and make them fit for the king's court, I suppose."

"No, Curdie," answered the princess, shaking her head, for she was not pleased with his reply. "It would be a poor way of making your hands fit for the king's court to take off them all signs of his service. There is a far greater difference in them than that. Do you feel none?"

"No," said Curdie.

"You will, though, by and by, when the time comes. And listen closely to what I tell you. Have you ever heard what some wise men say—that men were just animals once and grew up from them into men?"

"No," said Curdie, wondering.

"Well, it is no truer than this—*which is what you must remember*—that all men are in danger of growing backward and becoming animals. Many a man has become just a human hog or a beast of prey. Many a lady so delicate and nice that she can bear nothing coarser than the finest linen to touch her body, if she had a mirror that could show her the animal she was growing to would receive a great shock! Now you will have a great task to do presently, and you must have some way of knowing what sort of people they are with whom you have to deal. Now listen. Since it is always what they *do,* either in their minds or their bodies, that makes men turn into beasts, the change always comes first in their hands. And this is what the fire has done for you. It has made your hands so knowing and wise that you will hereafter be able to know at once the hand of a man who is growing into a beast. More than that, you will at once feel the foot of the beast he is growing to be, and so know him truly for what he is. And if any one is growing to something better, you will know that too."

When she ceased to speak, Curdie stood thinking and looking at his hands.

"Come here, Lina," said the princess at last, after a long pause.

From somewhere behind Curdie crept forward the same hideous animal which had fawned at his feet at

the door. Without his knowing, it had followed him every step up to the dove tower. At the sound of her name she ran to the princess and lay down at her feet, looking up at her with a most piteous expression. Lina had a very short body and very long legs like an elephant's, so that in lying down she kneeled with both pairs. Her tail, which dragged on the floor behind her, was twice as long and quite as thick as her body. Her head was something between a polar bear and a snake. Her eyes were dark green with a yellow light in them. Her under teeth came up like a fringe of icicles, only very white, outside of her upper lip. Her throat looked as if the hair had been plucked off. It showed a skin white and smooth.

"Give Curdie a paw, Lina," said the princess.

The creature rose and, lifting a long foreleg, held up a great, dog-like paw to Curdie. He took it gently, though with a shudder. But instead of a dog's paw he found that he was clasping the soft little hand of a child. The green eyes stared up at him with their yellow light, and the mouth was turned up toward him with its constant half grin. Yet here *was* the child's hand! Goblin animal as she looked, Curdie was sure that she had once been a woman. She had gone down into that ugly shape from being bad, and was now growing up again as a child.

"It is a child's hand!" he cried to the princess.

The Lady of the Silver Moon only smiled. Then

she said, "In the morning you must set out for the court—not like a great man, but poor just as you are. Tell your father that he must lay the stone I gave him last night in a safe place, not because it is a wonderful emerald, but because it will give him news of you. As often as he gets at all anxious about you he must take it and lay it in the fire and leave it there when he goes to bed. In the morning he must find it in the ashes, and if it be as green as ever, then all goes well with you. If it has lost color, then things go badly with you. But if it be very pale indeed, then you are in great danger and he must come to me."

"I will tell him," said Curdie. "Please, am I to go now?"

"Yes," answered the lady, and held out her hand to him. "I will send you a servant for your journey and to wait upon you afterward."

"But where am I to go?" asked Curdie. "And what am I to do? You have given me no message to carry, neither have you said what I am wanted for. I go without a notion whether I am to walk this way or that, or what I am to do when I get there—wherever it is!"

"Curdie!" said the princess, reproachfully. "Did I not tell you that you were to set out for the court? And you *know* that lies to the north. You must learn to use far less directions than that. You have orders enough to start with. And you will find, as you go on and as you need to know, what you have to do. But I

warn you that perhaps it will not look the least like what you may have been fancying I should require of you. Only be true and fearless, however, and all shall go well with you and your work."

Curdie said no more. He bowed his head, stooped to pat the strange head that lay at the princess's feet, and turned away.

As soon as he passed the spinning-wheel, which looked in the midst of the glorious room like any wheel you might find in a country cottage—old and worn and dingy and dusty—the splendor of the place vanished. He saw but the big bare room he seemed at first to have entered, with the moon—the princess's moon, no doubt—shining in at one of the windows upon the spinning-wheel.

Next morning, since the princess said he was to go like the poor boy that he was, Curdie came down dressed in his working clothes. His mother, who was busy getting his breakfast for him, would have had him put on his holiday things. And these, she said, would look poor enough among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the court. But Curdie reminded her that he did not know that he was going among fine people. Moreover, as work was better than play, his workday clothes must be, on the whole, better than his playday clothes.

When he had eaten his breakfast, his mother took a small bag made of goat-skin, with the long hair still on it, filled it with bread and cheese and

hung it over his shoulder. Then his father gave him a stick he had cut for him in the wood. Curdie bade them good-by rather hurriedly, for he was afraid of breaking down. As he went out he caught up his pickaxe and took it with him. It had on one side a pointed curve of strong steel for loosening the earth and ore. On the other end was a steel hammer for breaking the stones and rocks.

Just as he crossed the threshold of his cottage the sun showed the first piece of his golden disk above the horizon. And so at sunrise Curdie set out upon his strange and unknown journey.

CHAPTER IV

THE DANCE OF THE STRANGE BIRDS

CURDIE had to go to the bottom of the hill to get into a country he could cross, for the mountains to the north were full of precipices. Not till he reached the king's house where little Irene had lived was it of any use to turn northward. As he passed the house, at length, many a look did he raise toward the dove tower, but saw nothing of his Lady of the Silver Moon.

On and on he fared, and came at last to a country where there were no mountains more, only great stretches of barren plain. As the evening came on in this lonely land Curdie began to feel tired. He sat down under an old hawthorn tree. Through this tree, every now and then, a lonesome wind, that seemed to come from nowhere and go nowhere, sighed and hissed.

He had been so eager to get on that he had eaten nothing since his breakfast. He had had plenty of water, however, for many little streams had crossed his path. He now opened the bag his mother had given him and began to eat his supper. The sun was setting. A few clouds had gathered about the west, but there was not a single cloud anywhere else to be seen.

Now, Curdie did not know that this was a part of a country very hard to get through. Nobody lived there, though many had tried to build in it. Some of these died very soon. Some rushed out of the place. Those who stayed longest went raving mad and died a terrible death. Such as walked straight on and did not spend a night there got through well and were nothing the worse. But those who slept even a night in it were sure to meet with something they would never forget. And that old tree, under which the boy sat, and the plain around it, which stretched on all sides as far as he could see, were so withered that it was impossible to say whether they were alive or not.

While Curdie ate there came a change. Clouds had gathered over his head and seemed drifting about in every direction. The sun was going down in a storm of bright crimson. Out of the west came a wind that felt red and hot one moment and cold and pale the next. And very strangely it seemed to sing in the old hawthorn tree! It blew queerly about Curdie, now making him creep close to the tree for shelter from its shivery cold, and now fan himself with his cap, it was so sultry and stifling! It seemed to come from the death-bed of the sun, who was dying of fever and chills.

As he gazed at the sun, now on the verge of the horizon, very large and very red and very dull—for though the clouds had broken away a dusty fog was

spread all over it—Curdie saw something strange appear against it. It moved about like a fly over the burning disk, and looked as if it were coming out of the hot furnace heart of the sun. It was a living creature of some kind, surely, and so must be on the earth and not on the sun at all. He was only seeing it against the sun as a background. Its shape was very uncertain because the dazzle of the light all around it melted its outlines. But it was growing larger all the time, so it must be coming toward him!

It grew so swiftly that, by the time the sun was half down, its head reached to the top of the red arch. Presently nothing but its legs were to be seen. These were crossing and recrossing the face of the setting sun. When the sun was down he could see nothing more of it. But in a moment he heard its feet galloping over the dry, crackling plain and seeming to come straight for him.

He stood up, lifted his pickaxe, and threw the hammer end over his shoulder. He was going to have a fight for his life! And now it appeared again—vague, yet very awful—in the dim twilight the sun had left behind him. But just before it reached him, down from its four long legs it dropped flat on the ground. Then it came crawling toward him, wagging a huge tail as it came!

It was Lina! All at once Curdie recognized her—the frightful creature he had seen in the dove tower. He dropped his pickaxe and held out his hand. She

crept nearer and nearer and laid her chin in his palm, and he patted the ugly head. Then she crawled away behind the tree and lay down, panting hard.

Curdie did not much like the idea of her being behind him. Horrible as she was to look at, she seemed to his mind more horrible when he was not looking at her. But he remembered how he had found the child's hand in her dreadful paw, and never thought of driving her away. Now and then he gave a glance behind him. There she lay flat, with her eyes closed and her terrible teeth gleaming between her huge forepaws.

After his supper and his long day's journey it was no wonder that Curdie should now be sleepy. Since the sunset the air had been warm and pleasant. He lay down under the tree, closed his eyes, and thought to sleep. He found himself mistaken, however. But, though he could not sleep, he felt himself resting delightfully.

Presently he heard a sweet sound of singing somewhere. It was of a sort he had never heard before—a singing as of curious birds far off, which drew nearer and nearer. At length he heard their wings, and, opening his eyes, saw a number of very large birds, as it seemed, alighting around him while still singing.

It was strange to hear singing from such big birds. Still singing, they began to weave a queer sort of

dance about him, moving their wings in time with their legs. However, the dance seemed somehow to be troubled and broken—as if they were not able to do just what they wished. He soon learned, in the low growls behind him, the reason for this. They wanted to dance in a circle all around the tree, and Lina would not let them come on her side.

For one moment Curdie felt that he would much rather have the birds than Lina. But at the next he remembered how she lay at the feet of his Lady of the Silver Moon in the dove tower. So he left her to do as she would. And the birds had to dance part way around in one direction and then back again! If Curdie had only known! If those birds had been able to dance all around him in a circle he would have sunk down into a sleep from which he would never have waked again!

But their song and their motions and the waving of their wings began at length to make him very sleepy. All this time he had been doubting if they could really be birds. The sleepier he got, the more he imagined them something else, but he thought no harm. Suddenly, just as he was sinking down into a deep sleep, he awoke in fierce pain!

The birds were upon him—all over him—and had begun to tear him with their beaks and claws. He had but time, however, to feel that he could not move beneath their weight, when they set up a hideous screaming and scattered like a cloud.

Lina was amongst them, snapping and striking with her paws, while her tail knocked them over and over. They flew up and came down upon her in a swarm, so that he could see only a misshapen mass rolling away in the dark. He tried to follow, but could see nothing, and finally came back to the tree. He was afraid Lina had been torn to pieces, but presently she came limping back and lay down in her old place.

Curdie also lay down—but from the pain of his wounds there was no sleep for him. When the light came he found his clothes a good deal torn, and his skin as well. But Lina was in a far worse plight than he—plucked and gashed and torn with the beaks and claws of the birds. This was especially so about the bare part of her neck, so that she was pitiful to see!

"Poor Lina!" said Curdie. "You got all those wounds for helping me!"

She wagged her tail and made it clear that she understood him. Then it flashed upon Curdie's mind that this was the companion his Lady had promised him. Well! Lina was no beauty, but already this first night she had saved his life. From this on they should be close friends, look as she might!

"Come along, Lina," he said. "We want water."

She put her nose to the earth and, after snuffing a moment, darted off in a straight line. Curdie followed. The ground was so uneven that he lost

sight of her many times. At last he seemed to have lost her altogether. In a few moments, however, he came upon her waiting for him. Instantly she darted off again. After he had lost and found her again many times, he found her the last time lying beside a great stone. As soon as he came up she began scratching at it with her paws. When he had raised it an inch or two she shoved in first her nose and then her teeth and lifted with all the might of her strong neck.

When at length between them they got it up, there was a beautiful little well. He filled his cap with the clearest and sweetest water and drank. Then he gave some to Lina. Next he washed her wounds very carefully. As he did so he saw how much the bareness of her neck added to her ugliness. He thought of the goat-skin bag his mother had given him, and wondered if he could in any way make a collar of it for the poor animal.

He found there was just enough of it. Moreover, the hair on it was so like Lina's in color that no one would ever think that it had grown somewhere else. He took his knife, ripped up the seams of the bag, and began trying the skin on her neck. It was plain that she saw what he wanted to do. For she tried to hold her neck so as to help him, turning it this way and that as he worked.

Luckily his mother had given him some thread and needles before he started, and it was not long

before he had made a pretty good looking collar. This he laced upon Lina's neck with one of his shoe-strings which the long goat-hair covered nicely. Poor Lina looked much better for it, and if ever green eyes with a yellow light in them looked grateful, hers did!

As they no longer had any bag to carry it in, Curdie and Lina now ate what was left of the food. Then they set out again upon their journey.

For seven days they went on over the plain—on and on. They met with various adventures, but with nothing as dangerous as their fight with the birds. In all of them, however, Lina proved so helpful and so ready to risk her life for her companion that Curdie grew not only very fond but very trustful of her. Her ugliness, which at first only moved his pity, now really increased his affection for her.

One day, looking at her stretched on the grass before him, he said, "Oh, Lina, if the Lady of the Silver Moon would only burn you in her fire of roses!" She looked up at him, gave a mournful whine like a dog, and laid her head at his feet. Clearly she understood something of his words, but what or how much, he could not tell.

CHAPTER V

FORTY-NINE STRANGE ANIMALS

One day, from morning till night, they had been passing through a forest. As soon as the sun was down Curdie began to feel that there were more beings in it than themselves. First he saw only the swift rush of a figure across the trees at some distance. Then he saw another and another, and still others, both farther off and nearer.

At last he missed Lina, and, looking about for her, he saw something as weird looking as herself steal up to her. This creature began to talk to her after some beast fashion which she plainly understood. But soon what seemed a quarrel arose between them and strange noises followed, mingled with growls.

At length it came to a fight, which did not last long, however. For the creature of the wood threw itself on its back and held up its paws to Lina. She at once walked on, and the strange form got up and followed her. They had not gone far before another as strange an animal came up and the same thing happened. It threw itself on its back and held up its paws and then got up and followed Lina. Again and yet again and again, a fresh animal came up and did the same thing. At last, and before they were out of the wood, Lina was followed by forty-nine of the

queerest, ugliest shapes that any one could imagine.

To describe them were a hopeless task. One of them, for instance, was like a boa constrictor, walking on four little stumpy legs near its tail. About the same distance from its head were two little wings which it was forever fluttering, as if trying to fly with them. Curdie fancied it thought it did fly with them when it was merely plodding along busily on its four little stumps. How it managed to keep up with the rest he could not think till he missed it once. The same moment he caught sight of something at a distance plunging at an awful serpentine rate through the trees. Presently, from behind a huge ash tree, this same creature fell into the group, quietly waddling along on its four stumps. Watching it after this, he saw that it did the same thing every time it got behind. In this same mad fashion it shot ahead and a few minutes after toddled in again amongst the rest.

The others were equally strange looking and had equally strange ways of travelling. But Curdie had been too long used to the goblin creatures in the mines and on the mountain to feel the least fear at being followed by such a herd. On the contrary, their queer shapes and actions kept him amused and so made the journey seem shorter.

On they marched solemnly, almost in silence, for either with feet or hands the creatures seldom made any noise. By the time they reached the outside of

the wood it was the twilight of morning. Into the open trooped this queer band of shapes, all following Lina. But suddenly she stopped and said something which they understood, though to Curdie it seemed only like low growls. They all turned at once and hurried back into the wood, and Lina alone came trotting clumsily after her master.

They were now passing through a lovely country of hill and dale and rushing streams. Now and then they came to a large valley whose meadows were dotted over with cows, and whose slopes were covered with oats, barley, and wheat. At last they reached a broad, beautiful river up which they must go to get to the city of Gwyntystorm, where the king had his court.

As they went along the valley narrowed and then the river narrowed, but still it was wide enough for large boats. After this, while the river kept its size, the banks narrowed until there was only room for a road between the river and the great cliff that overhung it. At last river and road took a certain turn and lo! a great rock in the river, which, dividing, flowed around it. On the top of the rock stood the city with lofty walls and towers and battlements. Above the city lay the palace of the king, built like a strong castle. But its fortifications had been neglected. For the whole country was now under one king, and all men said there was no more need for weapons or walls.

No man here pretended to love his neighbor. But every one said that peace and quiet behavior were the best thing for himself. And that was quite as useful as loving his neighbor and a great deal more reasonable. The city was prosperous and rich under this way of acting, and if anybody was not comfortable, everybody else said he ought to be.

The gates stood wide open and were dropping from their hinges. The towers built for defence were crumbling to pieces. Everybody in the city regarded these signs of decay as the best proof of the prosperity of the place. Commerce and self-interest, they said, had got the better of wars, and the riches that flowed in upon them made up for any troubles that came.

Some said that the only reason for remembering their past history was that they might see how much smarter they were than their ancestors had been. And by far the greater part of the inhabitants of the city thought they were extremely fine people.

The street that led up to the king's palace was very steep, and just as Curdie entered it a baker, whose shop was but a few doors within the gate, came out in his white apron. He started across to the shop of his friend, the barber, on the opposite side of the way. As he ran he stumbled and fell heavily. Curdie hastened to help him up and found he had bruised his forehead badly.

He scolded furiously at a stone for tripping him

up, saying that he had fallen over it three times in the last month. He asked what the king thought he was about to allow a stone to stick up forever in the main street of the city wherein the king resided! What was a king for, if he would not take care of his people's heads?

"Was it your head or your feet that ought to bear the blame of your fall?" asked Curdie.

"Why, you booby of a miner, my feet, of course!" answered the baker.

"Well, then," said Curdie, "the king can't be to blame!"

"Oh, I see!" said the baker. "You are laying a trap for me. Of course, if it comes to that, it was my head which ought to have looked after my feet. But it is the king's part to look after us all, and have his streets smooth."

"Well, I don't see," said Curdie, "why the king should take care of the baker when the baker's head will not take care of the baker's feet."

"Who are you to make fun of the king's baker?" said the man, in a rage.

Instead of answering, Curdie went up to the rock in the street which had made the bump on the baker's head. Turning the hammer end of his pickaxe, he struck it such a blow that it flew wide in pieces. Blow after blow he struck until he had levelled it with the street.

But out flew the barber upon him in a rage.

"Why do you break my window, you rascal, with your pickaxe?"

"I am very sorry," said Curdie. "It must have been a bit of stone which flew from my pickaxe. I couldn't help it, you know."

"Couldn't help it! A fine story! What do you go breaking the rock for—the very rock upon which the city stands!"

"Look at your friend's forehead!" said Curdie. "See what a bump he has got on it with falling over that same stone!"

"What is that to my window!" cried the barber. "His forehead can mend itself. My poor window can't!"

"But he is the king's baker," said Curdie, more and more surprised at the man's anger.

"What is that to me? This is a free city. Every man here takes care of himself, and the king takes care of us all. I'll have the price of my window out of you, or the king shall pay for it."

He took Curdie by the collar. "Come now! You pay me for that window!"

"How much?" asked Curdie.

The barber said, "Half a dollar!"

But here the baker interfered. He was angry because the barber was heartless enough to think more of his broken window than of the bump he himself had received.

"No, no!" he said to Curdie. "A little pane of glass like that costs only a quarter."

"Well, to be certain," said Curdie, "I'll give him a half. Perhaps some day if he finds he has asked too much he will bring me back the difference."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the barber. "A fool and his money are soon parted!"

But he took the money from Curdie with a sense of great satisfaction. He had made a very good bargain and was a good deal in.

"I am glad that stone is gone, anyway," said the baker. "I had no idea how easy it was to remove it. Give me your pickaxe, young miner. I will show you how a baker can make the stones fly!"

He caught the tool out of Curdie's hand and flew at one of the foundation stones of the gateway. But he only jarred his arm terribly and scarcely chipped the stone. He dropped the pickaxe with a cry of pain and ran into his own shop. Curdie picked up his tool and, looking after the baker, saw bread in the window. As he wanted some bread, he followed the baker in. But the man was ashamed of himself, and, thinking Curdie was coming to laugh at him, popped out of the back door as Curdie came in at the front one.

The baker's wife, however, came in to serve him, and Curdie asked the price of a loaf. Now, the woman had been watching all that passed in the street, and she liked the look of Curdie. So she said to him in a low voice, "This is not the best bread. I

will sell you a loaf of what we bake for ourselves. And take care of yourself in this place, my boy! They do not love strangers here!"

Curdie thanked her as he took the bread, and she added out loud, "That is a queer-looking animal you have there!"

"Yes," answered Curdie. "She is no beauty. But she is very good and we love each other, don't we, Lina?"

Lina looked up and whined. Curdie threw her half of his loaf, which she ate while her master and the baker's wife talked a little. Then the baker's wife gave them some water. After Curdie had paid for his loaf and said good-by to the baker's wife he and Lina went up the street together. And as he went Curdie could not help thinking that he was not getting a very good opinion of the people who lived in the king's city. Somehow the habit of each man caring only about himself did not make them a very good sort, no matter how prosperous they were. And, if the king was served by this sort of people only, it might well be that he was in a great need of a different kind of helper.

It was not long before he had a better chance still to see of what kind were the people of rich and prosperous Gwyntystorm.

CHAPTER VI

CURDIE'S RECEPTION IN GWYNTYSTORM

The steep street led them straight up to a large market place, about which were many dogs. The moment they caught sight of Lina, one and all came rushing down upon her. When Curdie saw the dogs coming he heaved up his pickaxe over his shoulder and stood ready. A great, ugly bull-dog flew at him. With the first blow Curdie struck, the brute fell dead at his feet. Before he could get his weapon back a huge mastiff sprang at him.

Now it was Lina's turn. The instant she saw her master in danger she seemed to go mad with rage. As the mastiff jumped at Curdie's throat Lina flew at his, gave one roaring grind, and he lay beside the bull-dog with his neck broken. And now the dogs' masters, the butchers, came rushing up, knives in hand.

Curdie stood awaiting them fearlessly. Lina, at his heels, showed not only her outside row of icicle teeth but a double row of strong ones inside her mouth. Her green eyes flashed yellow as gold. The butchers did not like the look either of them or of the dogs at their feet. They drew back and began to scold and abuse them in words. They wound up by declaring that Lina should be burnt alive for her share in the work they had done.

"Not yet," answered Curdie. "We have done no wrong. We were walking quietly up your street when your dogs charged upon us. If you don't teach your dogs how to treat strangers, you must take what comes of it."

"They treat them quite properly," said one of the butchers. "What right has any one to bring a beast like that into our city? The horrid look of her is enough to make an idiot of every child in the place!"

"My poor animal cannot help her looks," returned Curdie. "How would you like to be served like that because you are so ugly? She is not a bit fonder of her looks than you are of yours! But what can she do to change them?"

"I'll change them!" shouted one fellow.

They were all about to rush upon them again when Lina gave a howl that might have terrified an army and crouched to spring. The butchers took to their heels and ran.

By this time a great crowd had gathered at a little distance. In it were a number of boys just out of school, who began to stone the strangers. It was a stupid way they had with anything they did not expect to get something out of. One of the stones struck Lina. She caught it in her teeth and crunched it so that it fell in gravel from her mouth.

Seeing this, the crowd scattered in all directions. Every one rushed into his own house and began to shut and lock his door. By the time the setting sun

shone down the street not a shop nor house was left open; but all the upper windows within sight of them were crowded with heads watching Curdie and his dreadful dog as they stood lonely in the deserted market place.

Curdie looked all around and saw not one open door. But he caught sight of an inn which ought to take people in. So, laying down his pickaxe and telling Lina to stay and watch it, he walked up to this door. The people in the house, however, instead of opening the door, threw things at him from the windows. They would not listen to a word he said, but sent him back to Lina with the blood running down his face.

When Lina saw that, she leaped up in a fury and was rushing at the house and would surely have broken into it. But Curdie called her back. As if she knew that it was she who had brought this trouble upon him, she went round and round him, purring like a tiger, and rubbing against his legs.

Now, there was one poor little house squeezed in between two much finer ones. In this cottage lived an old woman named Derba with her little grandchild, called Barbara. This poor woman was disliked by the other people for no better reason than because she was quiet and kept to herself. She minded her own business and did not gabble and gossip ill-naturedly with the rest of them in the market place.

While Curdie was wondering what in the world he

would do next, the door of this small house opened. A little dark-haired, dark-eyed child came toddling out and across the market place toward them. The moment they saw little Barbara coming, Lina lay down flat and with her huge forepaws covered her mouth. Curdie went to meet her, holding out his arms. The child came straight to him, holding up her face to be kissed. Then she took him by the hand and began to pull him toward the house.

But when Lina rose to follow, little Barbara was frightened. Curdie took her up, holding her on one arm and with the other hand patting Lina's head. Then the child also wanted to pat "doggie," and, having once patted her, nothing would do but Curdie must let her have a ride on doggie. So he set her on Lina's back, holding her hand, and she rode home in merry triumph without thinking of all the eyes that were watching them from the upper windows.

At the door the grandmother, Derba, stood to receive them. She caught the child to her breast, welcomed Curdie, and showed no fear of Lina. The people at the windows saw it. They began to gabble about it. They said it was just like the old witch to take in such a person and such a beast as that. No doubt they were old friends of hers, and they would plot mischief together finely. But Derba was only a wise woman who had watched how Curdie received little Barbara, and judged from that what sort they were. So she had made them welcome to her house.

SO HE SET HER ON LINA'S BACK, HOLDING HER HAND

The moment her door was shut the other doors began to open. Soon little groups appeared about a doorway here and there. They murmured and gabbled over the affair, and asked and discussed what they should do about it next. A few of the bolder ones ventured to go out into the market place—all ready to make for their homes again, however, upon the least sign of movement in the little thatched house of Derba.

And so they whispered and plotted about what they were going to do. Meantime, Curdie and Lina were sitting with the old woman and her grandchild, and they were all very comfortable and happy together. Little Barbara sat upon Curdie's knee and he told her stories about the mines and what had happened to him in them. Derba sat and listened. At last little Barbara fell asleep in Curdie's arms, and not long after they all went to bed.

In the night Curdie was wakened by Lina pulling at him. As soon as he spoke to her she ceased. Curdie listened and thought he heard some one trying to get in. He rose, took his pickaxe, and went about the house listening and watching. But though he heard noises, now at one place and now at another, he could not think what they meant, for no one appeared. Surely no one would attack Lina by night when she had scared them all so by day! By and by the noise ceased, and he went back to bed and slept quietly.

In the morning Derba came to him and said they

had fastened up the door from the outside so that she could not get out. And they found that not only the door but every window in the house was barred from the outside. They could not open one without using great force. Curdie burst out laughing! "They are much mistaken," he said, "if they fancy they could keep Lina and a miner like me in any house in Gwyntystorm—even if they built up the doors and windows!"

He took up his pickaxe, but Derba begged him not to make a hole in her house just yet. She had plenty of food for breakfast, she said. Before it was time for dinner they would know what the people meant by it. And, indeed, they did! Within an hour the chief magistrate appeared, bringing a score of soldiers with drawn swords, and followed by a great crowd of people. They blew a blast on a trumpet and read a long paper before the door. They called upon Curdie to give up himself and his beast, that he might be tried for what he had done and his beast might be burnt alive! The moment the reading stopped Lina ran into the little passageway and stopped in front of the door.

"I surrender!" cried Curdie.

"Then tie up your brute and give her here!"

"No, no!" cried Curdie through the door. "I surrender, but if you want my dog, you must take her!"

"Then we will set the house on fire and burn you and the witch and all!"

"Well, a few dozen of you may be killed first!" said Curdie. "We are not in the least afraid of you!" Then he turned to Derba and said, "Don't be frightened! I am sure that all will be well. Surely no trouble will come to you for being good to strangers!"

"But the poor dog!" said Derba.

Now Curdie and Lina understood each other more than a little by this time. He saw that she knew what was meant by the reading of that paper. And when she looked up at him after it was read it was with such a grin and with such a yellow flash that he saw that she was ready to take care of herself.

"The dog will probably give you reason to think a little more of her before long," he answered. "But now," he went on, "I am afraid I shall have to hurt your house a little. I hope, however, that I may be able to make up to you for it some day."

"Never mind the house, if only you can get safely off," she answered. "I don't think they will hurt this precious lamb," she added, clasping little Barbara to her breast. "For myself, it is all one. I am ready for anything!"

"It is but a little hole for Lina I want to make," said Curdie. "She can creep through a much smaller one than you would think."

Again he took his pickaxe and went to the back

wall. "They won't burn the house," he said to himself. "There is much too good a one on each side of it."

A hubbub had been going on all this time outside. And now, when they heard the sound of Curdie's pickaxe, a great cry went up and the people taunted the soldiers for being afraid of a dog and a boy miner. So the soldiers made a rush at the door and cut its fastenings.

The moment they opened it, out leaped Lina with a roar so horrible that the sword-arms of the soldiers dropped by their sides, stiff with fear, at that sound.

The crowd fled in every direction, shrieking and yelling. Without even knocking a man down, not to speak of *biting* one, Lina vanished—no one knew whither, for no one dared to watch her. The moment she was gone Curdie came out and gave himself up. The soldiers were so filled with fear and angry shame that they were ready to kill him on the spot. But as the magistrate wanted to question him, and the people wanted him made an example of, the soldiers had to be content just to take him. So they seized him and laid his pickaxe across his back and tied his arms to it.

They led him up a very steep street and up another still steeper, all the crowd following. The king's palace-castle rose towering above them. They stopped, before they reached it, at a low door in a great, dull, heavy-looking building. This they

opened with a key and ordered Curdie to enter. The place was as dark as night. While he was feeling his way with his feet some one gave him a rough push. He fell and rolled over once or twice, unable to help himself because his hands were tied behind him. They clapped the door to and locked him in.

The reason they shut him up in this prison was because the chief magistrate did not want to do anything more with him just then. It was the hour of the magistrate's second and more important breakfast. Until he had had that, he never wanted to attend to anything else. This was why Curdie was just locked up and had time to collect his thoughts.

He had very few to collect, for all he had to do, so far as he could see, was to wait for what came next. In a few minutes he found, to his great relief, that his fall had loosened the ropes which bound him to his pickaxe. With a little pull he got one hand free, and then the other. He got to his feet, his pickaxe in his hand, and was once more ready for action.

CHAPTER VII

CURDIE FINDS HIS WAY TO THE PALACE

After a while Curdie heard a sound outside of his prison door as if people were coming. The sound of feet and of voices began to grow so rapidly that it was plain a crowd was gathering. The noise grew till it was like the roaring of the sea. It went on a long time, for the chief magistrate did not like to hurry over his breakfast. He liked to be waited for. It made him feel important.

But at last there came the creak of the great rusty key in the lock, which groaned as it turned. The door was thrown back and the light rushed in. Some voice began to read out another long paper calling on Curdie to come forth and give himself up to be tried for his life because he had done this and that and the other. The voice was still reading when a scream of terror arose on the farthest edge of the crowd.

In a moment the air was filled with hideous howling, shrieks of fear, and a wild noise of running feet. The next minute, in at the prison door bounded Lina, her green eyes flaming yellow as sunflowers. With one spring she threw herself at Curdie's feet and laid her head upon them, panting. Then came a rush of two or three soldiers at the doorway. But it was only to lay hold of the key, pull the door to, and lock

it. Once more Curdie and Lina were prisoners together in the dark.

For a few moments Lina lay panting hard. It is breathless work, leaping and roaring both at once, to scatter thousands of people. Then she jumped up and began snuffing about all over the place. Curdie now saw what he had never seen before—two faint spots of light cast from her eyes upon the ground. He got out his tinder-box—a miner is never without one—and lit a small piece of candle he had, just for a moment—for he must not waste it.

The light showed him they were in a vault with no other opening than the door. It was very old and had plainly been used as a dump. A pile of rubbish sloped from the door to the opposite wall. Down in the angle between this back wall and the rubbish heap Lina was scratching with all her eighteen great, strong claws.

"Aha!" said Curdie, watching her. "If only they will leave us long enough to ourselves!" He turned to the door to see if it had an inside fastening so that he could keep them from opening it. It had none, but with a blow or two of his pickaxe, he smashed the lock so that they could not turn the key in it on the outside, and that did just as well. Then he put out his candle and went back to Lina.

She had now reached the rock of the floor. Presently she looked into his face and whined, as

much as to say, "My paws are not hard enough to get any further!"

"Then get out of my way, Lina," said Curdie. "And mind you keep your eyes shining, for fear I might hit you."

So saying, he began to dig with his pickaxe. The rock was very hard, but when it did break it broke in good-sized pieces. He worked till he was weary. Then he rested and again set to work. The darkness hindered him greatly, for he would not let Lina come close enough to give all the light she could, for fear he should strike her. So he had every now and then to feel with his hands to know how he was getting on and where to strike next.

He was getting very tired and hungry and a little discouraged. But just then out burst a dull, gleamy, lead-colored light, and the next moment he heard a hollow splash. A piece of rock had fallen out of the floor into some water down below. At once Lina was on her feet and peering down through the hole. Curdie got down on his hands and knees and looked.

They were over a cave in the rock. Through this cave a part of the river must be flowing, for at some distance below him a faint light was gleaming upon water. If they could get down to this water they might get out. Plainly, the first thing to do, then, was to make the hole bigger. It was now not so hard to break away the sides of it, and in another hour he had it large enough to get through.

The rope they had tied Curdie's hands with now came in handy. He made a slip-knot around his pick-axe so that he could lay this across the hole to hold him up, and then carefully got through the opening. First came a narrow cleft which afterward widened out into the cave itself. About two yards down he saw an opening on the other side of it, and made up his mind to explore that before trying to get down to the water.

Pushing with his feet against the wall beside him, he swung himself over into this opening. He laid a piece of stone on the end of his rope to keep it there till he came back and began to feel his way in. It turned out to be a passageway, level for a short distance and then sloping gently up. At the end his hands came upon a little door, studded with iron nails, but so rotten in places that he felt sure he could get it open.

As this was plainly the way to get out, he went back for Lina and his pickaxe. He easily pulled himself up the rope into the prison again and untied his pickaxe. Then he made Lina take the end of the rope in her teeth and lowered her through the hole. When she came opposite the passage, with a slight push of her tail she shot herself into it and let go the rope which Curdie drew up.

He searched about in the rubbish for a piece of iron to put across the hole and tie the rope to in place of his pickaxe, which he wanted to take with him.

Then he got an old shutter from the dump heap and leaned it over the hole, propping it up with a stick. Over this he piled a lot of light rubbish. Tying his pickaxe to the other end of his rope, he dropped it through the hole, and then got through himself. Holding on to the edge of the hole with one hand, he pulled away the stick and let the shutter with the rubbish on it fall over the hole to hide it. So if any one opened the door he would not know where Curdie had gone nor how he had got out.

He swung himself into the passage beside Lina, and, having secured the end of the rope, they went on together to the door. He used his pocket-knife on a soft part of the door near the latch, and soon made room for his hand and arm to get through. On the other side he found a great iron bolt, but so rusty that he could not move it. Lina whimpered. He took his knife again, made the hole bigger, and stood back. In she shot her small head and long neck, seized the bolt with her teeth, and dragged it with a grating noise back. A push then opened the door. It was at the foot of a short flight of stairs.

At the top Curdie felt that he was in a place of some size, but all was dark. Feeling about, his hands fell on a wine cask. He was about to go farther when he heard steps coming down another stair. He stood still, watching to see where the door would open. In another moment he heard the key turn in the lock and saw a light about fifteen yards to his right. A man

with a candle in one hand and a large silver pitcher in the other came walking toward them, his light showing a long row of wine casks stretching away into the darkness.

Very softly Curdie stole down the little stair he had come up and stood at the bottom, watching and wondering how he could keep the man from locking them in when he went out. On came the man and on, till Curdie was afraid he would come right up to them and see them. But, to his relief, the man stopped at the third cask away from them.

Into this cask he poured something from the silver pitcher. Then, stepping to the next cask, he drew wine from that into his pitcher and rinsed it out again and again. Then he drew some more wine from the same cask and drank it. But it was plain that he did not wish to taste what he had had in the pitcher, nor drink from the cask into which he had poured it. But after drinking he filled his pitcher from the first cask and took up his candle to go.

Curdie felt very sure that there was something wrong about what the man was doing. "Speak to him, Lina!" he whispered.

The sudden howl she gave made Curdie himself start and tremble for a moment. The man was so frightened that he answered with another howl and, staggering about, dropped his candle on the floor. The next moment, however, he recovered himself and flew to the door and darted through it, leaving

it open behind him. Curdie ran up the steps and picked up the candle, which was still alight. He sped after the man to the door, took out the key, and then ran back to the little stairs and waited.

In a few minutes he heard the sound of feet and of voices. Swiftly he turned on the tap of the cask from which the man had been drinking and set the candle down beside it. Then, with Lina, he stole down the steps again and out of the little door, drawing it to behind them. Through the hole in it he could see a little and hear more. A crowd of servants poured into the place of the casks. Up and down, up and down and around, they ran, searching and searching and searching. They saw nothing except the wine running to waste where the candle sat. Then they turned on the man, who was doubtless the butler, and scolded and jeered at him. They told him he was drunk and silly. After quite a while the hubbub died down and they all went away without even pulling the door to behind them.

Curdie was now sure that he was in the wine cellar of the king's palace. The next thing he wanted to do was to find something to eat. Going softly to the door which the butler had come through, he got into a passage, at the end of which a door stood ajar. Peeking through this he saw a large dining hall through which men who wore the king's colors were coming and going. Others lounged about a huge fire. But the most interesting thing was the supper on the

table. At once Curdie decided to dash in and snatch something if he saw the least chance. He picked out a fine meat pie to seize if the chance should ever come. He watched a long time and no chance came. Then, just as he was about to give up in despair, he saw that every one had gone out of the hall. In he darted, snatched up the pie, and sped noiselessly back to the cellar.

After eating up the meat pie to the very last crumb, there was nothing for Curdie and Lina to do but sit down and wait till the palace servants had all gone to bed. He was not at all sure that some of them might not come down into the cellar again. But perhaps they believed more of the butler's story than they chose to say, for none of them appeared.

As soon as he thought it safe to go Curdie took up his pickaxe and stole up again into the palace. Knowing that Lina would be quick to hide herself, he took her with him. When they reached the great dining hall they found it quiet and dark. One after another he came upon seven men fast asleep, most of them upon tables, one upon a chair, and one on the floor. They seemed to have eaten and drunk so much that they might have been burnt alive without waking. He took hold of a hand of each and found two ox hoofs, three pig hoofs, one which he could not be sure was the hoof of a donkey or of a pony, and one dog paw.

"A nice set of people to be about a king!" thought Curdie.

Then they found their way into the kitchen, which was black with smoke. The place was dirty and disorderly. In one corner a kitchen-maid lay on the floor, a table cover around her and a skillet in her hand. In another lay a page, and Curdie was surprised to see how like the page's dress was to his own. Around the hearth three dogs and five cats lay asleep while rats were running over the floor. Curdie's heart ached to think of little Princess Irene living over such a sty.

Next he found himself in the sculleries. There horrible smells were wandering about like evil spirits come out of the darkness. Everywhere was filth and ugliness. Mangy dogs were lying about, and gray rats were gnawing at refuse piled up in the sinks. It was like a hideous dream. Turning from it, he almost ran back through the kitchen into the hall.

He next found a door that opened into a wide passage, and this led to an arch in a stately corridor whose whole length was lighted with lamps set in niches. At the end of it was a large and beautiful ante-room with great pillars. There sat three men in the king's colors fast asleep, each in a great arm-chair with his feet on a huge footstool. They looked like fools dreaming themselves to be kings, and Lina growled as if she would like to choke them. At one

side of this ante-room was the grand staircase, and up this they now went.

Everything which met Curdie's eyes here was rich—not glorious like the splendor of the cave in the mountain where his Lady of the Silver Moon had appeared to him and his father—but rich and soft. They wandered about a good while, coming back again and again to the same place. In this way Curdie was getting some idea of the place.

By and by Lina began to look frightened, and as they went on she looked more and more frightened. By this time he had come to understand that what made her look frightened was always the fear of frightening some one. So now he knew that they must be coming near to somebody.

Presently, in a beautiful gallery, he saw a curtain of crimson, and on the curtain a royal crown worked in silks and precious stones. He felt sure this must be the king's chamber, and it was here that he was wanted. If it was not the place he was bound for, he was certain something would meet him and turn him back. So he gently lifted a corner of the curtain, and there behind it was a half-open door. He entered, and the moment he was in Lina stretched herself along the threshold between the curtain and the door.

CHAPTER VIII

CURDIE FINDS THE KING

He found himself in a large room dimly lighted by a silver lamp that hung from the ceiling. Far at the other end was a great bed, hung around with dark, heavy curtains. He went softly toward it, his heart beating fast. It was a dreadful thing to be alone in the king's chamber at dead of night. To gain courage he had to remind himself of his Lady of the Silver Moon who had sent him there.

When he was about half way to the bed a figure appeared from the farther side of it and came toward him with a hand raised warningly. He stood still. He could just see the form of a young girl, and, though she was taller than he remembered, he knew it was the Princess Irene. Like the true princess he had known, she walked right on fearlessly to meet him. As she drew nearer, she laid her fingers on her lips for silence and then stood looking at him.

"You are Curdie," she said.

"And you are the Princess Irene," he answered.

"Then we know each other still," she said. "And you will help me."

"That I will!" answered Curdie. (He did not say, "if I can," for he knew that what he had been sent to do, that he could do.) "May I kiss your hand, little princess?"

She held out her hand, saying, "I am not the

little princess any more. I have grown up since I saw you last, Mr. Miner."

"So I see," returned Curdie, "and therefore, being more of a princess, you are more *my* princess! Here I am, sent by your fairy grandmother to help you. But why are you up so late?"

"Because my father wakes up so frightened. I do not know what he would do if he did not find me by his bedside. There! He is waking now!"

She darted off to the bed and Curdie stood where he was. A feeble voice, altogether unlike what he remembered of the noble king on his white horse, came from the bed, saying, "I will not! I will not! I am a king and I *will* be a king! I hate you and despise you, and you shall not torture me!"

"Never mind, father dear!" said the princess. "I am here, and they shall not touch you. They dare not, you know, as long as you defy them!"

"They want my crown, darling, and I can't give them my crown, can I? For what is a king without his crown?"

"They shall never have your crown, my king!" said Irene. "Here it is—all safe, you see. I am watching it for you."

Curdie drew near the bed on the other side. There lay the grand old king—grand still, though looking twenty years older. His body was pillowed high. His beard, long and white, flowed down over the crimson coverlet around his crown with its flashing stones which lay before him. One thing made his

face very dreadful. His eyes—which saw neither his daughter nor his crown—looked more dead than his face.

Presently his murmuring ceased, though his lips still moved. Thus lay the old king slumbering, his crown between his hands. On one side of him stood a lovely little maiden with blue eyes and fair hair going a little back from her temples. On the other stood the young miner with his pickaxe over his shoulder. Stranger sight still was Lina lying across the threshold—only nobody saw her just then.

When the king's breathing grew quiet again the princess gave a sigh of relief and came around to Curdie. "We can talk a little now," she said, leading him toward the middle of the room. "My father will sleep now till the doctor wakes him to give him his medicine. It is not really medicine, though, but wine."

("Wine!" said Curdie to himself, and thought of what he had seen the butler do in the wine cellar.)

"The doctor says," the little princess went on, "that nothing but that could have kept him alive so long. He always comes in the middle of the night to give it to him with his own hand. But it makes me cry to see him wake him up when he is so nicely asleep!"

"What sort of a man is your doctor?" asked Curdie.

"Oh, such a dear, good, kind gentleman!" replied Irene. "He speaks so softly and is so sorry for his

dear king! He will be here soon and you shall see for yourself."

"Has your king-father been long ill?" asked Curdie.

"A whole year now," she answered. "Did you not know? They told me the whole land was mourning over it."

Now Curdie had not heard a word of his majesty's illness, nor did he think that a single person in any place through which he had come had heard of it. Why were they lying to the princess?

"Does the king wander like this every night?" he asked her.

"Every night!" said Irene, shaking her head sadly. "That is why I never go to bed at night. He is better during the day—a little. And then I sleep in the dressing room there, so as to be with him in a moment if he calls me."

"I wish he would like me," said Curdie. "Then I might watch by him at night and let you go to bed, princess."

"Don't you know, then?" returned Irene, in wonder. "How was it you came? Ah, you said my fairy grandmother sent you. But I thought you knew he wanted you!"

"Not I!" said Curdie, wondering, but very glad.

"He used to be constantly saying that he wished he had you about him. So they wrote to the miner-general to find you and send you here. But they told us they had searched every mine in the kingdom

and could not find you. Where were you, Curdie, that they could not find you?"

Now Curdie was sure that these were only more lies that they had been telling her. So all he said was, "I will tell you about that another time, when you are not expecting the doctor."

As he spoke his eyes fell upon something shining on the table under the lamp. His heart gave a great throb. Yes, there could be no doubt about it! It was the same silver pitcher which the butler had filled in the cellar when Curdie first got into it through the little old door. The butler had first poured something into the cask and then carefully rinsed out the pitcher before he himself drank! And then he drank from *another cask!* Poison! It flashed upon Curdie in an instant that this was what they were giving the king in his wine. Now, how could he prevent their giving him any more?

"When will the doctor be here?" he asked Irene hurriedly. He wanted to know if he had time to run to the cellar, rinse out the pitcher, and fill it with *good* wine before the doctor came.

His question was answered not by the princess but by something which at that instant tumbled heavily into the room. Curdie flew toward the door to see what had happened to Lina. He saw on the floor a little round man puffing and blowing and muttering things they could not hear.

"Oh, dear Doctor Kelman!" cried the princess,

running up and taking hold of his arm. "I am so sorry!" She pulled and pulled, but might almost as well have tried to set up a cannon ball. "I hope you have not hurt yourself!"

"Not at all! Not at all!" said the doctor, trying to smile and to rise both at once, but finding it impossible to do either.

"If he slept on the floor he would be late for breakfast," said Curdie to himself, and held out his hand to help the man up. But when he took hold of the doctor's hand he very nearly let it fall again! For what he held was not even a paw or a hoof—it was just like a snake!

"Our royal highness has rather a thick mat at the door," said the doctor, turning to Irene and thinking that Curdie was only a page. "I hope my awkwardness may not have startled his majesty."

While he talked Curdie went to the door to see what had become of Lina, but she was not there. He came back, still wondering how he was going to get a chance to pour out the poisoned wine he felt sure was in that pitcher and fill it with good wine for the king. Meantime the doctor approached the bed.

"How has my beloved king slept to-night?" he asked.

"No better!" answered Irene, with a mournful shake of her head.

"Ah! that is very well," said the doctor, without thinking what he was saying. "We must give him his wine and then he will be better still."

At the word Curdie darted at the pitcher, and lifted it high, as if he expected to find it full and had found it empty.

"That stupid butler! I heard them say he was drunk!" he cried in a loud whisper, and was gliding from the room.

"Come here with that pitcher, you page!" cried the doctor.

Curdie came a few steps toward him, dangling the pitcher down from his hand so that the wine all ran out of it. It fell without noise on the thick crimson carpet, where it did not show.

"Do you know, young man," said the doctor, "that it is not every wine that can do his majesty the good I intend he shall get from my prescription?"

"I know it, sir," answered Curdie. "The wine for his majesty's use is in the third cask from the corner." (But he was quite determined that his majesty should never have a drop from that cask again if he could help it!)

"Fly then!" said the doctor, looking satisfied.

Curdie stopped outside the curtain and blew a low breath—no more. Up came Lina like a shadow. He showed her the pitcher. "The cellar, Lina," he said.

She galloped away on her soft feet and Curdie had indeed to fly to keep up with her. Not once did she make a wrong turn. From the king's beautiful chamber down to the cold cellar they shot. There Curdie rinsed out the pitcher very carefully, as he

had seen the butler do. Then he filled it from the cask out of which he had seen the butler drink. For he knew that *that* must be very good wine indeed—the best in the cellar. That done, he hastened up with it again to the king's room.

The little doctor took it, poured out a full glass, smelt but did not taste it—he did not care to taste the kind he thought Curdie had brought—and set it down. Then he leaned over the bed, shouted in the king's ear, and blew upon his eyes. He pinched his arm, and Curdie was sure he saw him run something bright into it.

"They are poisoning him with something beside wine!" he said to himself when he saw that.

At last the king half woke. The doctor seized the glass, raised the king's head, poured the wine down his throat, and let his head fall back on the pillow again. Wiping his majesty's beard with a show of tenderness, and bidding the princess good-night with a show of affection, the snake-handed doctor then took his leave. Curdie would have been glad to drive his pickaxe into his head as he went. But he felt that he had not been sent to do that and so let him go.

The little round man looked carefully to his feet as he crossed the threshold again. But there was nothing there to trip him.

"That polite fellow of a page has taken away the mat," he said as he walked along the corridor. "I must remember him!"

CHAPTER IX

CURDIE FINDS GOOD FOOD FOR THE KING

It was plain enough to Curdie how things were going. He saw also that he must have the princess of one mind with him and they must work together. It was clear that among those about the king there was a plot against him. They had been telling the princess lies about several things, and Curdie was sure that the doctor was trying to ruin the king's health and reason. That done, they could do what they liked, whether he lived or died. Curdie thought that in the end they meant to kill the king and marry the princess to one of themselves, who would then rule over the land.

The first thing to see to, therefore, was that his majesty should neither eat nor drink anything prepared in the palace. If he could have prevented this without letting the princess know why, he would rather not have told her what must, of course, terrify her. But it must be done. It was clear that his Lady of the Silver Moon had sent him for just this work. As for the way in which he was to do it, he was sure he might do anything to fool these traitors short of lying to them.

While he stood thinking about these things, the princess was watching the king with looks of childish

love and tenderness which went to Curdie's heart. Now and then, with a great fan of peacock feathers, she would fan him very softly. If a cloud seemed to gather over his face she would bend over and whisper in his ear. Then the king would sleep again quietly.

Curdie came a little nearer and called her softly. In a few moments she came to him where he stood under the silver lamp. Then he told her all his story —how her fairy grandmother had sent her white pigeon for him—how she burned his hands in the fire of roses to make them able to tell whether people were good or bad—how she had sent him there that he might help the king and his little princess—and, lastly, of the state of things he had found downstairs in her palace.

"You frighten me dreadfully!" said Irene, trembling. "*What* is to be done? How *am* I to believe such horrible things of Doctor Kelman?"

"Either you must believe it of him," said Curdie, "or you must doubt your fairy grandmother. For it is by the gift she gave me in my hands that I know that he is a snake. Do you not see he is doing wrong to your father? Is not the king sleeping better since he had the wine?"

"Yes," said Irene.

"Does he always sleep better after having it?"

She thought a moment and then answered, "No, always worse—till to-night!"

"Then remember it was the wine *I* got for him—not that which the doctor ordered and the butler brought. Nothing that passes through any hand in the house except yours or mine must reach his majesty's lips till he is well."

"But how can we manage that, dear Curdie?" said the princess, almost crying.

"We must find some way," answered Curdie. "I know how to take care of the wine. But for the food—we must think!"

"He hardly takes any," said Irene with a sad shake of her little head.

"The more need," replied Curdie, "that there should be no poison in it. As soon as he has honest food he will begin to grow better. But good food! Where shall I find it?"

"I would go with you to hunt some," said the princess, "but I dare not leave my father. Alas! he scarcely ever takes more than a mouthful. I can't think how he lives! And the very thing he would like and often asks for—a bit of bread—I can hardly ever get for him. The doctor has forbidden it!"

"Bread at least he *shall* have!" said Curdie. "That with the honest wine will do as well as anything, I do believe. I will go at once and look for some. But I want you to see Lina first and know her so that you will not be frightened at her."

"I should like much to see her," said the princess.

Curdie went to the door and called his strange

creature. Lina came in, creeping with downcast head, and dragging her tail over the floor. Curdie watched Irene as the queer animal came nearer and nearer. One shudder went through her from head to foot. Lina dropped flat on the floor and covered her face with her big paws. It went to the heart of the princess. In a moment she was on her knees beside her, stroking the ugly head.

"In Lina's paw," said Curdie, "I feel the hand of a child. So I know she was once a woman and grew bad. Now she is growing good again. And now that you have seen her, shall I take her with me or leave her here with you?"

"Leave her, poor dear," said Irene. So Curdie, knowing his way about now without Lina, left her there and went away alone. But, hunt as he would downstairs, he could find nothing that looked like wholesome food. He was forced to return to the princess with empty hands. As they were talking things over again he suddenly thought of something else he could do.

As soon as it was light he would go back into the city of Gwyntystorm for bread. This plan he told to Irene, and asked her for a handkerchief to tie up the loaf in. For if he could not bring it himself he would send it by Lina, who could keep out of sight better than he could. Then as soon as all was quiet he would come to her again. And when the king

waked she must tell him that he, Curdie, was in the house and ready to serve him faithfully.

His hope in making the plan about the bread lay in the fact that everywhere the bakers go to work early. But as yet it was much too early. So he persuaded the princess to lie down and sleep, promising to call her if the king should stir. But his majesty slept quietly, and the dawn had almost grown to day before he could bring himself to waken the princess. At last he did, and when she came she said she felt quite fresh, for she had slept well.

Then Curdie took up his pickaxe and started off, followed by Lina. As they went through the servants' hall they took some breakfast and ate it after they reached the cellar. Then they went down the flight of steps which led to the little old door by which he had first got into the cellar, through this and along the passageway. There Curdie found his rope, and, drawing himself up it, pushed away the shutter that covered the hole and so got back into his old prison. Then he swung the end of the rope back to Lina, who caught it in her teeth and gave a great spring. Such a spring she gave that she came within a few feet of the hole. The instant she got a paw through this she was all through.

There was no sign that any one had tried to open the door while they had been gone. The people were only too willing to let them stay there and starve. A blow from the pickaxe knocked off the lock. Tell-

ing Lina to wait there and let no one in, Curdie walked out into the silent street and drew the door to behind him.

In the faint morning light he made his way straight down the middle of the street till he came to the city gate. He soon found the baker's shop where he had bought his loaf of bread from the baker's wife. Here he stopped and stood silently waiting till some one should appear and open the shop. After quite a while a man came out with a pail and went off to a pump for water.

Curdie at once stole in through the half-open door. He remembered perfectly the shelf from which the baker's wife had taken the loaf she said was the best. There was one on it now. Seizing it, he laid down the price of it on the counter and sped softly out and up the street.

Once more in the prison beside Lina, his first thought was to fasten up the door again. Then it occurred to him that if he left it as it was and they came to find him they would think he had got out that way. So they would not search about and find the hole in the floor, and he could come and go that way again if he chose.

Back in the cellar he had to find out how to get the loaf to the princess. He crept to the door of the servants' hall and found everybody astir there. Plainly it would not do for him to try to pass through. So down he went to the cellar again. He took out

Irene's handkerchief from his pocket and with it tied the loaf about Lina's neck. And Lina, in her own peculiar way, slid through shadows and around corners and down dimly-lighted corridors till she once more reached the chamber of the king.

Irene trembled a little as she saw her glide noiselessly into the room. But the bundle about Lina's neck filled her with joy. It both told her of Curdie's safety and gave her hope for her father.

And now the king waked and wanted food. If only he might have a piece of nice fresh bread, he said. Irene had no knife, but with eager hands she broke a great piece from her loaf and poured out a full glass of wine. The king ate and drank and at once fell asleep again. It was some hours later before the lazy people in the palace brought up some breakfast for the princess and the king. When it came Irene crumbled a little about, threw some into the fireplace, and managed to make the tray look just as usual.

By and by Doctor Kelman returned to see the king. Now that Irene had been told by Curdie what he really was, she could see that he was not at all pleased to find the king some better. But he tried to cover it up by saying that he was glad to find his majesty well enough this morning to see his lord chamberlain, who had an important paper for him to sign. But he must warn his majesty, he said, not to

try to read or understand this paper—for *that* he was too weak—but just to sign it.

When the doctor went away Irene gave her father more bread and wine. The king ate and drank and smiled a feeble smile—the first real one she had seen for many a day. Then the princess told him that Curdie was come and that at night, when all was quiet (for nobody in the palace must know it), he would pay his majesty a visit. Her fairy grandmother had sent him, she said. The king looked strangely upon her as she told him this, but the strange look passed into a smile clearer than the first. Irene's heart throbbed with delight, for she saw that the king's courage had come back.

At noon the lord chamberlain came in. With a long, low bow, and with a paper in his hand, he stepped softly into the room. He was a lean, long, yellow man with a small head. He had a very thin hooked nose and eyes that were small, sharp, and glittering and as black as jet. He had hardly enough of a mouth to make a smile with. His left hand held the paper, and the long, skinny fingers of the right a pen just dipped in ink.

The king was so much himself again as to resolve at once not to sign that paper until he knew what was in it. It might be something to sign away his rights and those of his little princess. So he asked the lord chamberlain to read it to him first. Now this was just what the lord chamberlain did not wish to do.

He wished the king to sign the paper without knowing what was in it. He stammered and stumbled so over the reading that the king could not make out what it was about. So he stopped the lord chamberlain and called to Irene.

"You can read print well, my child," he said. "Let me hear how you can read writing. Take that paper from his lordship's hand and read it slowly from beginning to end."

But this the lord chamberlain wanted just as little. He insisted that the princess should not be put to such a task, and at last said angrily that his dignity was offended by having a child set to read his paper.

"It would be to make sport of my business, your majesty," he said. "This paper is much too important to trifle with!"

"Then it is too important for me to deal with while I am ill," said the king, wearily.

"Will your majesty please to sign your name here?" said the lord chamberlain, thinking the king had given up the struggle.

"I will not sign the paper to-day," answered the king.

The lord chamberlain still tried to persuade him, but the king refused again and again. At last the lord chamberlain had to go without getting what he came for. He was furious. And well might he be furious, for that paper was the king's will, and the plotters could do nothing further until he had signed

it. Now the doctor had promised them that the king's brain should be so weakened by his treatment that he would do anything they asked. The lord chamberlain sent in a rage for Doctor Kelman. The doctor had to confess that somehow the king seemed better. But he promised faithfully that he would soon have him too weak to resist them again.

If the king's officers were angry, however, the princess was in high delight. Not for weeks had she heard so many words—not to say words of such strength and reason—from her father's lips. Even now he was tired out after this effort. But he asked for more bread and wine, and, when he had taken them, fell into another quiet and restful sleep.

CHAPTER X

CURDIE DISPOSES OF THE DOCTOR

The day went on. When his majesty was awake the princess read to him one story book after another. And whatever she read the king listened as if he had never heard anything so good before. Every now and then he asked for a piece of bread and a glass of wine. Then he slept, and when he woke up he seemed better. The princess did her part in the eating, too; so that the loaf was eaten up and the pitcher emptied before night. The butler took away the pitcher and filled it. But, as she dared not touch that wine, Irene and her father were both thirsty and hungry when Curdie came back.

He and Lina had spent the day in the cellar, resting and sleeping. When supper time came Curdie took his place at the door into the servants' hall. After a long hour's watch in vain he began to fear he should get nothing, so many people were coming and going all the time. It was very hard to bear, because he had his eye on a splendid loaf just out of the oven which he longed to get for the king and the princess. At last he saw his chance, pounced on the loaf and a meat pie beside, and carried them away.

This time both pie and loaf were missed. The cook was called. He swore he had sent in both and

some one must have taken them for some friend outside the palace. A house-maid who had not been there long said she saw some one who looked like a page running toward the cellar with something in his hands. This brought trouble on all the pages. At last all the other servants set out for the cellar to hunt out the guilty page.

Curdie and Lina heard them coming and quickly got out of the little back door. From there they could hear all that went on. When the servants could find nothing and nobody, they all turned on the house-maid and told her she was the thief herself. They jeered and nagged and scolded her for a long time. Curdie was much disgusted with their language and their ways. Moreover, he saw how much danger of discovery by them he ran now, and made up his mind that the only thing to do was to drive them all out of the palace. He thought he knew a way to do it, too. This plan he told to Lina, for he had long been sure that she understood every word he said to her. And now, by the wagging of her tail and the flashing of her eyes, he saw that she understood perfectly just what was to be done.

But they could do nothing till they got the king safely through the worst part of this same night. And all they could do now was to wait till the household should be asleep. This waiting was hard for Curdie, and it occurred to him that there was something he could do to pass the time. He took his pick-

axe and a lighted candle-end and went down into the little back passageway. With a miner's instinct, he was going to see what kind of rock it was made of. When he first came to Gwyntystorm and broke the stone in the street over which the baker had fallen he saw some shining specks in it which he took to be gold ore. Now he would see if there were enough of it in the rock to pay for digging it out.

He had not been long at work before he was sure that there was. And as soon as he could get the king free from rogues and villains he would have all the best and most honest miners, with his father at their head, to work this rock for the king. The time passed quickly while he was at his old work of digging. When he left the passage to go at last to the king's chamber he had already a good big heap of fragments behind the broken door.

As soon as he had reason to hope that the way was clear Curdie stole softly into the hall with Lina behind him. There was no one asleep on the bench or on the floor. But by the fading fire sat a girl weeping. It was the same house-maid who had seen him carrying off the food, and had been so abused by the others for saying so. She opened her eyes wide when he appeared, but did not seem frightened at him.

"I know why you weep," said Curdie, "and I am sorry for you."

"It *is* hard not to be believed just *because* one speaks the truth!" said the girl.

"You are a stranger," she added, weeping again, "but the stranger you are to such a place and such people, the better!"

"I am the person," said Curdie, "whom you saw carrying the things from the supper table." He showed her the loaf. "If you can trust me as well as speak the truth, I will trust you. Will you trust me?"

She looked at him steadily a moment. Then, "I can," she answered.

"One thing more," said Curdie. "Have you courage as well as faith?"

"I think so."

"Look my dog in the face and don't cry out! Come here, Lina!"

Lina obeyed. The girl looked at her and laid her hand on her head.

"Now I know you are a true woman," said Curdie. "I am going to set things right in this house. Not one of the servants knows I am here. Will you tell them to-morrow morning that if they do not change their ways and give over lying and drinking and stealing they shall every one be driven from the palace?"

"They will not believe me."

"Most likely. But will you give them the chance?"

"I will."

"Then I will be your friend," said Curdie. "Now wait here till I come again."

When he reached the royal chamber he found his majesty awake and very anxious to see him. He received Curdie with the utmost kindness. He at once put himself in Curdie's hands by telling him all he knew about the state he was in. His voice was still feeble, but his eye was clear.

The king said he had long been losing heart over the wickedness of his people. He tried hard to make them good, but they got worse and worse. The main cause of his illness was that he worried over this. The whole country was discontented, he said. They told him his army would no longer obey him; that his great white horse was dead; that his sword had lost its keenness. They came at night and tried to steal his crown, and a demon in the shape of his physician came and poured poison down his throat.

The talking made him faint, and Curdie seized the wine pitcher and ran down to the wine cellar. In the servants' hall the girl still sat by the fire waiting for him. As he came back he told her to follow him, and left her at the chamber door till he came out again. After the king had had a little wine Curdie told him about the doctor—that it was the doctor himself who had been coming every night and giving him slow poison.

"So!" said the king. "Then it was not a dream!

Is it possible he can be such a wretch? Whom am I to trust?"

"Not one in the house except the princess and myself," answered Curdie.

"I will not go to sleep," said the king.

"No, no, sire!" said the boy. "You must show your trust by leaving all the watching to me, and doing all the sleeping your majesty can."

The king smiled a contented smile, turned on his side, and was soon fast asleep. Then Curdie persuaded the princess also to go to sleep. He now left Lina to watch, and went out to the house-maid waiting at the door. He asked the maid if she could tell him which of the king's counsellors slept in the palace, and if she could show him their rooms. She knew every one of them, she said, and took him the round of all the rooms, telling him which one slept in each room. He then let her go, and, going back to the king's chamber, sat down behind a curtain at the head of the bed. He told Lina to get under the bed and make no noise.

About one o'clock the doctor came stealing in. He looked around for the princess and, seeing no one, smiled and went up to the pitcher of wine. He poured some into a glass and then took from his pocket a small bottle and filled up the glass from that. The light fell upon his face, and Curdie could plainly see the snake in it. He now went to the bed, set down the glass, and began to rouse the king in his

usual rude way. When his majesty did not wake at once, he took a lancet from his pocket with a low hiss of hate. Just then Curdie stooped and whispered to Lina, "Take him by the leg!"

She darted noiselessly upon him. With a face of horror the doctor gave his leg a tug to free it. The next instant Curdie heard the crunch with which she crushed the bone like a stalk of celery. The doctor tumbled over on the floor with a yell.

"Drag him out, Lina," said Curdie.

Lina took him by the collar and dragged him out. Curdie went with her to show her what to do. They took him to the lord chamberlain's door and left him lying in front of it. There the doctor gave another yell and fainted.

The king had waked at his first cry. Just as Curdie came back his majesty had got at his sword, which hung by the bed, had drawn it, and was trying to get out of bed. When Curdie told him all was well he lay down again quietly. Then Curdie went back to the door to watch what happened.

The doctor's yells had roused many, but no one had yet dared to appear. Bells were rung, but no one answered. And in a moment or two Curdie saw what he had hoped would happen. The door of the lord chamberlain's room opened and his lordship peeped out, pale with terror. Seeing no one, he stepped out into the corridor—and tumbled over the doctor!

At once Curdie ran up and held out his hand to help him up. In the hand which he received he felt the claw of a bird of prey—a vulture or an eagle, he could not tell which! His lordship was soon on his legs. Taking Curdie for one of the pages, he abused him for not coming sooner, and threatened to have him turned out of the king's service. Then, catching sight of the doctor on the floor, he began to abuse Curdie again, and ordered him to go for help at once.

Curdie left him, but slipped into the king's chamber, closed and locked the door, and left the rascals to look after each other. Soon he heard hurrying footsteps, then a great noise of scuffling feet, low voices and deep groans; then all was still. Curdie looked for the princess, and found she had slept quietly through it all. So Curdie sat down once more to guard the king. For the rest of the night he watched every motion of the sleeping king. At sunrise he called the princess.

"How has his majesty slept?" were her first words.

"Quite quietly," answered Curdie. "That is, ever since the doctor was got rid of."

"How did you manage that?" inquired Irene, and Curdie had to tell her all about it. "His majesty went off to sleep again in a moment or two," he added. "For a little while he was restless, and once, when he lifted his hand, it came down on the spikes of his crown and he half waked."

"But where *is* the crown!" cried Irene.

"Look!" said Curdie, moving away from the bedside. In the middle of the floor the princess saw a strange sight. Lina lay at full length, fast asleep. Between her two paws that met in front of it, her nose just touching it behind, glowed and flashed the crown.

"But what if a thief should come and she not wake?" said Irene.

"Lina!" said Curdie.

She was on her feet in an instant, her great tail sticking straight out behind her.

"Good doggie!" said the princess, patting her head. Then Irene took up the crown and laid it where the king could see it.

"Now, princess," said Curdie, "I must leave you for a few minutes. You must bolt the door, please, and not open it to any one."

He knew it was time to set about the plan he had spoken about to Lina by which they could drive the bad servants out of the palace. So away Curdie went to the cellar with his great dog, taking care as they passed through the dining hall to get her a good breakfast. Then out of the cellar and through the passage till Curdie pulled himself up into the prison again. He pulled up Lina, opened the door, let her out, and shut it again behind her. By the time he got back to the door of the king's chamber Lina was flying out of the gate of Gwyntystorm as fast as her mighty legs could carry her!

CHAPTER XI

CURDIE DRIVES OUT THE BAD SERVANTS

THAT same morning in the dining hall all the servants began to behave in a very ugly manner to the house-maid. She had promised Curdie to give them one more chance, but it was hard to bear with the way they treated her. "What has come to you!" growled one. "Are we all dirt, do you think? Do you want to be treated as you deserve, or will you speak and say why you go around looking like that?"

"You will not believe me," answered the girl.

"Of course, not! Why should we? But let us hear!"

"It is this, then. If you do not repent of your bad ways, you are all going to be punished—all turned out of the palace together."

"A mighty punishment!" cried the butler. "And what have I to repent of?"

"That you know best yourself!" said the girl.

"Pray, Miss Judgment, who gave you such an impudent message to us?"

"One who is going to set things right in the king's house. He told me to tell you that the servants of this house had to repent of thieving and lying and drinking and unkindness. And they will be made to repent of them in one way, if they do not do it of themselves in another."

Then arose a great hubbub. "Thieving indeed!" cried one with a bad conscience in that direction. "Drinking!" cried another who often stole down into the wine cellar. "Lying!" said a great, coarse footman. "Unkindness!" shouted still another. They all fell furiously upon the house-maid. They hustled her along the passage to the cellar stairs, pushed her down it, and locked the door upon her. That is how the servants repented!

Meantime, Curdie had to wait until evening before Lina would return and help him with his plan. He watched with the king, and read to his majesty, and helped Irene put the room in order, for no servants came near them. When the dark finally came, he took his pickaxe and, telling Irene to lock the door and let no one in, sped away to the cellar. At the top of the cellar stairs he found, to his surprise, that the door was locked. His pickaxe soon opened it. At once some one laid a hand on his arm.

"Who is it?" said Curdie, somewhat startled.

"I told you they would not believe me," said the house-maid. "I have been here all day."

"Come with me now," said Curdie. "I will see that they do not harm you again."

He left her in a safe corner in the cellar to wait for him, and hurried on into the passageway and up into the prison. Lina had done her part. The place was swarming with creatures. All about the vault lay and stood and squatted those queer forty-nine animals which Lina had overcome when she and

Curdie were coming through the forest to Gwynty-storm.

The first thing to do was to get them into the cellar as fast as he could. But how was he to make the hole big enough for the big ones? A way was soon found for that. One creature had a head like a great club. He began to pound around the sides of the hole to loosen more of the rock. Then came one like a tapir with a nose a yard long, the end of which seemed to be made of very hard steel. He began to gnaw the edge of the hole in such a way that the rock fell like a shower of gravel into the water below. In a few minutes the hole was big enough around for all of them to pass through, be they big or little.

But now, how was he to get them down? A full half of them were too heavy for his rope and his arms! This was a good deal of a puzzle. At last he sent Lina down to show them the way, thinking that that would induce some of them to follow. But no one of them seemed to want to be the first to try. One by one the creatures came to the hole and looked down after Lina, and each in turn drew back as if to say to the next one behind him, "Now you have a look!"

At length it came to the turn of the big serpent with the four short, stumpy legs behind and the fluttering little wings in front. No sooner had he poked *his* head through than he poked it farther still —farther and farther yet, till only his legs and tail were left in the prison. His head and neck reached

clear across into the passage beside Lina. He gave a little scramble with his feet and in a moment he was all across.

"That is all very well for you, Mr. Leg-serpent!" thought Curdie. "But what about the rest?"

Just then the creature's head came back up again and he caught hold of the iron bar and settled it firmly across the hole. From there he stretched clear down and across into the passageway. He looked up at Curdie as much as to say, "Well, here is a bridge for the rest of you! Come along!"

At once Curdie started down this queer bridge to show the rest of them the way. He slid down it with ease and safety. One by one the odd creatures followed. When he thought they had all come down into the passage, Curdie counted them to be sure they were all there. There were only forty-eight! One was missing! He must have been left behind in the prison. So back up into the prison Curdie went, and sure enough, there he found one who had been afraid to follow. And no wonder! For he had no head nor legs nor arms nor tail. He was just round like a great ball with a face on one side of it!

He had come with the rest from the forest to the prison as fast as any, rolling swiftly over the ground. But the leg-serpent's back was not flat, and he was afraid he would roll off him and drop into the water below. So Curdie picked him up in his arms and, holding him safely, slipped down the bridge again and over into the passage. Then he and Lina took

the whole number of odd beasts along the passage and into the cellar where the house-maid was waiting for him.

Leaving the creatures there, he asked the house-maid to show him a way to the king's chamber without his having to go through the servants' dining hall.

"There is a way through the chamber of the colonel of the guard," she said, "but he is ill in bed."

"Take me that way," said Curdie.

By many ups and downs and windings and turnings she brought him into a dimly-lighted room where an elderly man lay asleep. His arm was outside the coverlet, and Curdie gave his hand a hurried grasp as he went by. His heart beat with joy, for in it he found a good, honest human hand.

At the door of the king's chamber Curdie told the house-maid to go down once more to the servants' hall and give them one warning more. Then he slipped in to give the king his supper. Afterward he told the princess to lock the door and not to be afraid, no matter what sort of noises she heard. Then he went out.

Down in the hall the servants fell upon the house-maid as roughly as ever. She gave her message as before, but they only hooted and howled.

"Did your *messenger* mention me in particular?" shouted the butler. "I should just like to hear him!"

"Then hear him now!" said the voice of Curdie in the doorway. "I declare this butler a villain and a

traitor to the king! But what better is any one of the rest of you who cares only for himself; who eats and drinks and takes good money, but gives vile service in return; who steals and wastes the king's property and makes his palace a disgrace!"

For a moment they all stared in silence, even though they saw that he was just a miner boy with a pickaxe. Then with a roaring laugh a big footman came forward.

"I thought as much!" he cried. "This *messenger* is just a jailbird! He is the one they put into the old prison to starve. But he got out—to come here and preach!"

He put out his hand to seize Curdie. Curdie caught his hand and felt in it only a stupid ox-hoof. So he just struck him a light blow, and the footman let his arm fall with a roar. Now there rushed upon him the butler with a red-hot poker, and the cook with a sharp-pointed spit, used for roasting. Curdie gave a shrill whistle as he struck them back, and, with a howl to wake the dead, Lina dashed in, her eyes flaming like candles, and the butler went down in a moment. Then there came the rest of the creatures, stalking, rolling, leaping, gliding, or hobbling into the room. Ball-body—rolling and bounding through the crowd—placed himself at one door. A scorpion as large as a huge crab took his place at the other.

A scene of terror followed as the queer creatures began chasing the servants round and round the hall. The women shrieked and ran madly. If any one of

them fell down or threw herself down, she was poked or clawed or nibbled up again. The men were served no better. At last all of them, men and women, were chased into the kitchen. Here they were flung about in all directions. Their clothes were torn from them. They were pinched and scratched any and everywhere. Ball-body kept rolling up them and over them. The scorpion kept grabbing at their legs. A three-foot centipede kept screwing up their bodies, nipping as he went.

Next they were hunted into the scullery. Here they were splattered with the dirt that was all about. They were soused in the slops of water they had left around. They were smeared with ill-smelling grease.

At last they got a door into a back yard open and rushed out—only to find that the wind was howling and the rain falling in sheets. Around and around the yard in the storm they were chased, and the only way out was one that led into the streets. Out every soul of them was driven and left, some standing, some lying, and some crawling in the pouring rain. The door was flung to behind them and they heard it locked and bolted.

And now Curdie had to deal with the people of higher degree who were plotting to seize the king's crown. The chief ones he would punish—the rest he would chase away. He discovered that these chief ones—the secretary, the lord chamberlain, the master of horse, and the attorney-general—were having a secret talk. Finding a closet next to the room they

were in, he was able to overhear their plan. This was to kill the king that very night, seize the princess, and take possession of the kingdom. After talking this over, they went away for a few hours' sleep, all but the secretary, who was to sit up and call them at the right time.

Soon after, Curdie took Lina and softly opened the door of the room in which the secretary sat. She crept in and laid herself down against it. When the secretary caught sight of her he stood frozen with terror. But she made neither motion nor sound. So, gathering his courage, he made a step forward. Then she showed her teeth with a horrible, horrible growl and he sank fainting into his chair.

The leg-serpent Curdie took to the lord chamberlain's door. His lordship was fast asleep in a magnificent silver-gilt bed. Under it went the leg-serpent and out on the other side, over it and back—five or six times, folding coil after coil about it. Then, rearing his head, he began to hiss in his lordship's face. His lordship awoke and howled in terror. He struggled to escape. The leg-serpent seized him by his hooked nose, and the man vulture knew that it was of no use to struggle any further.

The tapir with the steel nose took charge of the master of horse. When the master of horse saw the beast come in, he sprang from bed and flew at him, sword in hand. The tapir's hide did not feel his sword. But the tapir's steel nose just pecked at his

ON A FOOTSTOOL, A YARD OFF SAT THE SPIDER GLARING AT HIM

legs till he jumped into bed groaning, and covered himself up. And every once in a while the tapir would go and pay a visit to his toes.

For the attorney-general, Curdie led to his door a huge, huge spider. This man had not gone to bed, but sat in a chair asleep before a great mirror. For he had been trying the effect on his coat of a big diamond star he had taken from the Treasury and which he thought he would be sure to get if the plot against the king went through. When he woke he thought himself paralyzed. For strands and strands and strands of spider web bound him tight to his chair. On a foot-stool a yard off sat the spider, glaring at him.

Then began a general hunt with the rest of the creatures to drive all the other people out of the palace. Out of their beds in their night clothing, out of their rooms, whether gorgeous chambers or just garrets, the creatures hunted them. No one was allowed to escape. At last they were all shivering outside the palace gates. When they set out to look for shelter, the inns were so full of the servants who had been driven out before that these courtiers could find no room. Most of the people of Gwyntystorm shut them out. They said they must have been awfully wicked to have been treated so. The chief of these courtiers, the lord chancellor, was at last taken in by Derba, where little Barbara lived and where Curdie had found shelter when he first came to Gwyntystorm.

CHAPTER XII

THE KING AND THE FIRE OF ROSES

Curdie brought Derba into the palace now to be a sort of housekeeper for the king. And with Derba to prepare his food, and Curdie to protect him, and Irene to nurse him, the king was getting stronger rapidly. Good food was what he most wanted, and of that there was now a-plenty. Under the honest hands of the one house-maid the royal chamber became a pleasure to the eye. With such changes it was no wonder if the king's heart grew lighter as well as his brain clearer.

The one honest attendant of the king, the colonel of the guard, was also growing better. Curdie went often to see him. They were soon friends, for the best people always understand each other most easily. Outside in Gwyntystorm the king's enemies, chief of whom was the lord chancellor, were spreading bad tales. The king, they said, had murdered some of his faithful servants, and the others had barely escaped with their lives. Mad or wicked, he was unfit to rule, and more unfit to have charge of the Princess Irene. The lord chancellor began at once to devise how he might destroy his master. Soon he set out for the neighboring kingdom of Borsa-grass to invite the king of that country to enter Gwyntystorm and destroy its ruler.

And now, back in Curdie's old home in the little cottage on the mountain side, it was known that things were getting dangerous for Curdie. One morning, when Peter, his father, looked at the emerald given him by the Lady of the Silver Moon and which he had laid in the ashes the night before, it was almost gray and dead. The old princess had told him that when it looked like this he was to come to her as fast as he could. So away rushed Peter to the dove tower to ask help for his son. He knew nothing of the way, yet somehow he found it and stumbled up the many stairs to the three doors in the dove tower and opened them one after the other.

The first showed a bare, empty room with but a chair and an old spinning-wheel. The second showed simply a great abyss of darkness from which he started back in a great fright. But from the third came signs of life—a noise and rush like a great tide of water! From the open door hundreds of white wings flapped and flashed in the sunlight. White pigeons without number poured out into the air, hovered for a moment like a huge white cloud, then, turning, sped away toward the north and vanished from sight. Nowhere was the old princess to be seen, and Peter, staying for nothing more, rushed out of the house and set forth in the same direction whither the birds had flown, to go and find his boy and give him what help he could.

Meantime Curdie and the others in the palace

might have starved if they had depended upon the people of Gwyntystorm to send them food. Not a thing was done for the king by his people in the town. But one night Lina came to Curdie and made him understand that she wanted to go out. He opened the door and away she went. Before midnight of that same day she came back dragging in her mouth a young deer she had caught in the forest. A few days after, the leg-serpent went out through the little back door in the wine cellar, wriggled along the passageway, and dived into the water of the river below. He returned after a while with a fine fish. So there was food enough, after all, and nobody went hungry.

So things went on for some time while the king was getting well rapidly. Then one night came the news that the king of Borsa-grass was marching upon Gwyntystorm to capture it. Of course, the people of Gwyntystorm would throw open their gates and welcome him. Where were there any soldiers who would fight for the rightful king? What would now save little Irene and her father?

Curdie saw that there was one thing he could do, though how much good it would accomplish he could not tell. But he could call Lina and the creatures and go out to meet the enemy. It would be a strange company to lead against an army of soldiers; and he would probably be killed. Well, if he died, he died for the right, and there was an end of it. But first

he must have a good night's rest. So he called the house-maid and left her to watch this night by the bedside of the king. He himself went out into the corridor, lay down, and was soon fast asleep.

Somewhere in the middle of the night he woke suddenly. He could not tell what it was that waked him. But he saw something strange. The curtain of the king's door, a dull red always before, was glowing a gorgeous purple, and the crown embroidered on it was flashing as if it burned. Was the king's chamber on fire? He darted to the door, lifted the curtain, and saw—a wonderful sight!

A long, broad marble table that usually stood at one side of the room had been drawn into the middle of the floor. On it burned a great fire of a sort that Curdie knew—a fire of glowing, flaming *roses,* red and white! In the midst of the roses lay the king, moaning but motionless. Every rose that fell from the table, someone, whom Curdie could not see for the brightness, lifted and laid upon the king's face! At length it was all covered with them, and he lay all within the fire, moaning still, with now and then a shuddering sob.

The shape which Curdie saw and yet could not see wept over the king as he lay in the fire and often hid her face in handfuls of her shadowy hair. From her hair the water of her weeping dropped like a sunset rain in the light of the roses. At last she lifted a great armful of her hair and shook it over

the fire. The drops fell from it in showers, and they did not hiss in the flames. There arose instead the sound of running brooks!

The glow of the red fire died away, and the glow of the white fire grew gray and the light was gone. On the table all was black except the face of the king, which shone from under the burnt roses like a diamond in the ashes of a furnace. Now Curdie saw and knew his Lady of the Silver Moon! The room was lighted by her face, by her blue eyes, by her sapphire crown. Her golden hair went streaming out from her through the air till it went off in mist and light. She was large and strong as a Titaness! She stooped over the marble table, lifted the king in her arms as if he had been a child, and laid him in his bed. Then darkness fell and Curdie could see no more.

He turned away with joy in his heart, his breast, his head, his whole body! All was safe! All was well! He turned back into the corridor and once more lay down to rest. With the handle of his pick-axe clasped in his hand, he sank into a dreamless sleep.

When, next morning, Curdie went into the king's chamber, the house-maid sat where he had left her. Everything in the room was as it had been the night before, only that a heavenly odor of roses filled the air of it. He went up to the bed. The king opened his eyes, and the soul of perfect health shone out of

them. The fire of roses had burned all the sickness and weakness out of him.

"Is it time to rise, Curdie?"

"It is, your majesty. And to-day we must fight!"

"Then fetch me my armor—that of plated steel." As he spoke he reached out his hand for his sword, drew it, and looked at the blade. "A little rusty, but not useless as they said! Now go and call the colonel of the guard."

Presently the colonel stepped into the room, armed from head to foot. He, too, was well again, for the Lady of the Silver Moon had passed through his room in the night, though he did not see her.

"Why!" said the king. "You are dressed before me. You need no servant either when there is battle in the wind."

"Battle, sire!" returned the colonel. "Then where are our soldiers?"

"Why *there* and *here!*" returned the king, pointing first to the colonel and then to himself. "What else was in your thoughts when you put on your armor?"

"I came for your majesty's orders," said the colonel, simply.

The king smiled and turned to Curdie. "And what was your thought, Curdie? For your first word was of fighting!"

"See, your majesty," answered Curdie. "I have polished my pickaxe. If your majesty had not been

able to take the command against the king of Borsagrass this morning, I would have met the enemy at the head of my beasts and died in comfort—or done better!"

"Brave boy!" said the king. "He who takes his life in his hand is the only soldier. And now, colonel, can you find me a horse? For they told me my white charger was dead."

"I will seek a horse for your majesty," said the colonel, "and one for myself."

"One for my miner boy, too," said the king. "And a sober old steed for the princess. She, too, must go to the battle and conquer with us."

"Pardon me, sire," said Curdie. "A miner like me can fight best on foot. Besides, I must be near my beasts."

"As you will," said the king. "Three horses, then, colonel. And, Curdie, go and bind fast those plotting rogues of yours so that you may take the beasts that are guarding them to the battle with you."

Now when the colonel entered the stables there stood the king's great white horse which he had been told was dead! In another stall he found his own black one. After a little search he found a big red one about twenty years old and very steady, which he thought would do for the princess. The housemaid came and helped him, and together they led out the three horses into the court-yard.

Here in the court-yard the king with the princess

stood waiting, in full armor, and wearing a slender crown of rubies and diamonds on his helmet. For the princess, they brought out her queen-mama's saddle, rich with gems and gold. They strapped it upon the big red horse and lifted her into it.

"But it is too big, king-papa!" said Irene. "And this horse is too tall. May I not have instead my own white pony?"

"Surely," said the king, "if he can be found!"

"He can be found," said the house-maid, quietly. "I will go and fetch him."

After a little she came from the stable, leading the white pony. Just at that moment, from a side door, came Lina with the forty-nine queer animals behind her.

"I will go with Curdie and the Uglies!" cried Irene. And as soon as she was mounted she rode into the middle of the pack and took her place there.

And so they set out, the strangest force that ever went against an enemy! The king in shining armor sat stately on his white steed, with the stones flashing on his helmet. Beside him rode the colonel upon his black horse. Behind them Curdie walked, his pick-axe gleaming in the sun. At his heels followed Lina. Behind her came the wonderful company of Uglies. In the midst of these rode little Princess Irene, dressed in blue and riding the prettiest of white ponies. Last of all came another who was quite unnoticed till Curdie happened to turn his head in that

direction. Then first he saw that the house-maid, whom all had forgotten, was following, mounted on the great red horse and seated in the royal saddle!

On they went through Gwyntystorm, which all the men had deserted to join the army of the king of Borsa-grass. On and on, till about a mile down the river, the king caught sight of the enemy's tents pitched where the bank of the river widened into a little plain. The enemy saw them, too, and were at once in motion. In a very short time the battle was on!

The butchers and the bad servants of the palace rushed first upon the king. Curdie, with Lina and her pack, bounded to meet them. Curdie struck down the first one with his pickaxe. Lina rushed raging and gnashing among them! Down went the butchers, one leg of each man crushed by Lina's jaws! Then she flashed in among the dogs!

Curdie and the Uglies turned to help the king and the colonel, who were now fighting with the soldier guard who had once served in the palace. The horses of the guard, struck with terror at the look of the strange beasts, reared and snorted, then whirling about fled from the field. But behind them came up at once the ranks of the soldiers of Borsa-grass. Upon them charged the king and the colonel and Curdie with his beasts. But they were so many in number that now the king and his companions were in the greatest possible danger.

Just then a dense cloud came over the sun, and sank swiftly toward the earth! The cloud moved all together, and yet it was made up of thousands of white flakes, each one moving by itself. These flakes were the wings of pigeons!

Down swooped the birds upon the soldiers of Borsa-grass! Right into the faces of man and horse they flew with swift-beating wings, blinding their eyes! Horses reared and plunged and wheeled! All was at once in confusion! The men made frantic efforts to catch the birds, but not one could they touch! Between every wild clutch came a peck of a beak and a slap of a wing in the face! Down and up again the pigeons skimmed, and around and around! It was like a storm at sea in which the wind was made up of birds and the sea made up of men!

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE ENDED AND THE KING RESTORED

THE moment the battle began the pony of the princess took fright and started to run away. But the house-maid wheeled her red horse right across the path and stopped him. The princess and her attendant then sat there watching the battle.

There was something very strange about it, the princess thought. It seemed to her that after any of the pigeons dashed into the faces of the soldiers and horses, those pigeons always flew back and made a circle around the head of the house-maid on the red horse before darting off on another attack. There were so many pigeons that there was a great flapping and flashing of white wings about them all the time. Then, too, it seemed to Irene that the maid was constantly waving her hand toward the enemy. And as the birds flew just as she waved her hand, it looked as if the strange maid were casting them at the enemy like spears. The moment a pigeon had rounded her head, it went off straight as a bolt from a bow.

The princess was not the only one who noticed this. The leaders of the enemy, standing on a little hill not far away, saw it also. Believing it was some wicked spell being woven against them, they rushed

THE MOMENT A PIGEON HAD ROUNDED HER HAND IT FLEW OFF STRAIGHT AS A BOLT FROM A BOW

down the hill to fall upon the house-maid and destroy her. But as the first man reached her a strong old miner suddenly stood beside her. With his pick-axe he struck at the foremost rider, and horse and man went down together. Before the next one could strike at her, a mass of pigeons darted into the faces of him and his horse. In a moment he lay beside his companion. The rest turned and fled with a cloud of birds after them.

"Ah!" said the maid to the old man. "You came then, Peter! Welcome and thanks!"

"Peter!" thought the princess. Was not Peter the father of Curdie? How had he come there? It was all very strange!

By this time the battle was about over. The soldiers were on the run, the strange beasts roaring in the midst of them, and the birds picking and slapping at their faces.

"Call off your Uglies, Curdie," shouted the king, "and let the pigeons do the rest!"

He did so, and they watched the white mass in the air put an end to the strange struggle. Homeward the soldiers rushed by the road they had come, many dropping on the way and lying where they fell. The pigeons were always in the necks of those who ran. At last the eyes of the king and his attendants saw only a dust cloud below and a bird cloud above. Before night the bird cloud came back, flying over

Gwyntystorm. Swiftly sinking, it disappeared among the old roofs of the king's palace.

From the fight the king and his army returned home. With them they brought one prisoner only—the lord chancellor, who had brought the soldiers of Borsa-grass to fight his own king. When Curdie dragged him out from under a fallen tent, he found that his hand had in it the foot of a mule!

When the king's force entered his city of Gwyntystorm it was as still as the grave! The wicked citizens had fled back home thoroughly beaten! But because they were afraid to face their angry king, they hid themselves in their houses. The king's whole train walked quietly through the streets to the gates of the palace. Just as they reached the gate, Peter, who had been telling Curdie how he came to be there, ended with the words, "And so I was in the nick of time to save the two princesses!"

"The *two* princesses, father! The one on the red horse was the house-maid!" cried Curdie, and ran to open the gates for the king.

After they had eaten, and rested themselves, the king told Curdie to go and bring the prisoners who were bound in the palace, and the lord chancellor, into the market place of Gwyntystorm, and to have his queer beasts come with him. Then the king put on his crown and went out and stood in the centre of the market place. He called to the people to come out of their houses and stand before him. And,

though they were in dreadful fear of Curdie's creatures, they dared not disobey, and came.

"You are a bad people!" said the king, sternly. "And you have been well punished. But these men here"—pointing to the lord chancellor and the doctor and the attorney-general and the butler and the lord chamberlain and the master of the horse—"are worse than you, because they misled you and made you worse than you would have been without them. Now you shall see how I punish them, so that you may mend your ways and not incur the same punishment!"

He made a sign to Curdie, who at once brought up the leg-serpent. To his body they bound the lord chancellor, who howled with terror. The butler they bound to the body of Club-head. So one after the other they bound them all upon the bodies of the strange creatures.

Then the king said, "My good beasts, take these men with you and go to your places!"

At once the beasts rushed into the crowd, scattering it like a cloud of leaves! Out of the city they tore and vanished from sight. And what became of the bad men they bore away was never known.

When the king returned to his palace he said to Curdie, "You are henceforth my own boy, Curdie. My darling princess cannot choose but love you, and when I am gone you and she shall be king and queen."

After that the people called him Prince Curdie,

but the king always called him just "Curdie" or "my miner boy."

When they sat down to supper that night Curdie had another surprise. The house-maid waited on them, and as she passed Curdie she looked him full in the eyes. Curdie started and sprang from his seat. Then he dropped on his knees and cried out, "My Lady of the Silver Moon!"

And she said to him, "Did I not tell you, Curdie, that it might be you would not know me when next you saw me?"

She went out of the room and in a moment returned in royal purple with a crown of diamonds and rubies. From under this her hair went flowing to the floor, all about her ruby-slippered feet. Her face was radiant with joy! The king rose and kneeled on one knee to do her homage. And all the rest kneeled behind him to show her honor.

Of course, the king had now to find new people to serve under him and rule the people. So he sent out Curdie to find him people that had human hands instead of beasts' paws. Out of these he formed a new household. The evil men he had punished had wasted all his money, and the people were too poor to give him any. But he remembered the gold Curdie had found in the rock under his palace. So he sent Peter to gather some honest miners and dig out what he needed to make into money. In this way things were set right and the land was once more ruled in the right way.

The Lady of the Silver Moon lived now with her pigeons somewhere up in the top of the king's palace instead of in the dove tower away on the mountain side. She still watched over the lives of those dear to her in the palace, though it was not often that any one saw her. Once more, however, Curdie was to see her, and to see a strange sight when he came upon her.

Up into the top of the palace he went one day, seeking her. After long wandering about, through a half-open door he thought he smelled the odor of her fire of roses. Pushing open the door softly, he saw, to his amazement, the same room which he had entered long ago in the dove tower—the long, misty room with the spinning-wheel whirling in blue light, behind and beyond which he had found the Lady of the Silver Moon waiting for his coming. There he had seen the fire of roses, and in that fire his hands had been burned into their power of feeling what people really were.

He went softly forward, and this time, too, he found her on the other side of her whirling wheel. There before him burned the fire—a huge heap of red and white roses. Before it she was now standing as he had seen her stand before. A little behind her was Lina, slowly wagging her tail and watching, with her eyes on the Lady, till the right moment should come. The beautiful princess was casting roses, more and more roses, upon the fire. At last she turned and said, "Now, Lina!" Instantly, burrowing into the fire, Lina went with a dash. There rose

up a black smoke and a dust, and Lina was never more seen in the palace.

And now you would like to know what became of Gwyntystorm. Irene and Curdie were married. The old king died and they were king and queen. So long as they lived Gwyntystorm was a better city and good people grew in it. But they had no children, and when they died the people chose a king.

Now the new king went mining and mining in the rock under the city. He grew more and more eager after gold, and paid less and less heed to his people. Rapidly they sunk toward their old wickedness. But still the king went on mining, and coining gold by the pailful, until the people were worse even than in the old time. So greedy was the king after gold that he made the men chip away the pillars of the rock which Peter and his miners had left to hold up the city. From the thickness of an oak tree of a thousand years they chipped them down to the size of a fir tree of fifty.

One day at noon, when life was at its busiest, the whole city fell with a roaring crash! The cries of men and the shrieks of women went up with its dust, and then there was a great silence. Where the mighty rock once towered, covered with homes and crowned with the royal palace, now rushes and raves the foaming rapids of the river. All around spreads a wilderness of wild deer. The very name of Gwyntystorm has ceased from the lips of men.